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Activating Justice: Local Appropriation of Transitional Justice in Sierra Leone

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Signed Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Laura S. Martin

Abstract

This thesis examines local transitional justice programmes and processes in Sierra Leone. I will examine both recognised mechanisms – official institutions with preconceived goals and processes that are already recognised as part of the transitional justice 'toolkit' and unrecognised mechanisms – processes outside the institutional transitional justice scope and discourse. Much research and analysis of these processes often prioritise organisations and their programmes as the starting point of investigation and fail to recognise the various individual actors involved, both within the organisational structures and the groups for whom these programmes are designed. Moving beyond discussions of impact and effectiveness, this thesis examines the actual activity of Sierra Leonean individuals in both recognised and unrecognised processes.

Fambul Tok is an example of a recognised local transitional justice programme, which seeks to facilitate justice and reconciliation through bonfire ceremonies to make the programmes more contextually relevant for rural communities. I will look at the various individuals involved in constructing and shaping how Fambul Tok operates and is represented to different audiences to better understand dynamics amongst different Sierra Leoneans with attachments to different places, all of whom theoretically constitute the local. My thesis will demonstrate how transitional justice processes are not only institutional, but also individual. I move away from discussions about 'societies,' normative questions of institutional effectiveness, the underlying assumptions that propel transitional justice programmes and mechanisms and look more specifically at the activities and appropriation of individual actors within these transitional justice processes to better illustrate the diverse means through which individuals construct as well as engage with local transitional justice programmes and the unique unrecognised ways individuals move past their war-related experiences.

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Introduction

Village members are slowly gathering around as the bonfire crackles in Gbintimaria. The setting is completely dark, but not at all quiet. Everyone present is Sierra Leonean, except me. Drummers begin playing and the traditional sampa[1] dances different 'plays.' People are giving "small money" to the sampa. There is lots of chattering and loud conversation, children giggling and running, men exchanging greetings and a young man who runs to do a flip over the bonfire. Women are walking around selling groundnuts, sweets and little plastic packets of alcohol. Across the road, the only other light in the village is coming from a hut with young boys who are using a generator to charge their phones and watch films. Motorbikes and public transport occasionally drive through. As the music comes to an end, the Fambul Tok staff stand up with a megaphone and explain the programme: 'What made the war happen? Jealous minds, greed; what will make the war not happen again? Selflessness and love. If we love ourselves, we won't hurt ourselves and we will unite as one. After the war, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission came, but maybe you did not get the chance to go. It is your time to get things off your chest. If you come up [and speak], your mind will blow and God will bless you.' People slowly and hesitantly came forward to 'blow their minds.' However, just as individuals began to discuss their wartime experiences in front of the village, the crowd began chattering and many people left, not due to a particular event, but because they were uncomfortable. Many returned when the dancing began again.

This is an anecdote from a bonfire ceremony I witnessed, facilitated by Fambul Tok in March 2014, in Bombali district. Fambul Tok is a Sierra Leonean-based organisation that sought to fill the perceived local transitional justice and reconciliation gaps in rural communities after the decade-long civil conflict (1991-2002). Founded in 2007, the organisation distinguishes itself as 'local', because their director, staff and participants are

[1] A woman dressed in traditional garb who sings and dances. She is part of the female secret society.

all Sierra Leonean. They also advocated ownership of their programmes by appointing committees in each area they work. Their primary programme has been to facilitate bonfire ceremonies, wherein victims and perpetrators could discuss their war-related experiences. If the person was present as the individual is telling his or her story, offenders can apologise and victims can offer forgiveness. Descriptions of these ceremonies in Fambul Tok's book and documentary film project a quiet, serene setting. In actuality, the ceremonies were rather chaotic, with people constantly coming and going, loud discussions and other music blaring in the background. While everyone present is Sierra Leonean, there are evident divisions between staff members themselves, villagers and between staff and villagers. Fambul Tok's explanation of the conflict is indicative of these divisions. They draw on religious and traditional beliefs to explain both the cause of the conflict and the prevention of future conflict, thereby 'vernacularising' global discourses into familiar idioms (Levitt and Merry 2009). These discourses indicate that individuals are both the cause and the solution of the conflict, and it is the job of Fambul Tok staff to 'teach' participants why the war occurred and how best to move past their war-related experiences in order to facilitate justice, reconciliation and the prevention of future conflict.

Based on seven months of fieldwork in 2014, I found that bonfire ceremony participants were not interested in 'blowing their minds,' a Krio phrase emphasising the cathartic nature of speaking out about war-related experiences (Shaw 2007, 184). Some individuals did not have an interest in speaking publicly, while others had learned how to manage their war-related experiences through alternative channels prior to Fambul Tok's arrival. This does not mean, however, that Fambul Tok was simply ignored. Rather, individuals saw the programme as an opportunity to, for example, sell their own goods at the bonfire ceremony, or, in the case of one village, reconcile more contemporary issues unrelated to the civil conflict. Ultimately, individuals creatively appropriated the programme in different ways alternative to its intended purpose. This demonstrates how programmes do not necessarily change individuals, but are subject to individual agency and shaped by pre-existing social, cultural and economic structures and priorities.

Fambul Tok is an example of a local transitional justice programme. Transitional justice is, broadly speaking, an 'umbrella' term that refers to mechanisms and programmes frequently employed after authoritarian repression or armed conflict to help societies move past their experiences from these periods (Bell: 2009). Fambul Tok is emblematic of a more recent trend in transitional justice programmes, namely a shift towards incorporating local dimensions, such as traditional ceremonies or rituals, to make programmes more effective and contextually relevant (Shaw and Waldorf 2010). Local is also often equated with national (i.e. Sierra Leonean) (Ozerdem and Lee 2015). Writings on local transitional justice processes, however, tend to focus on organisations or programmes that cite particular groups they intend to assist, such as 'victims' (McConachie and McEvoy 2013; Robins 2011; Robins 2013), 'ex-combatants' (Sriram *et al.* 2013; Theidon 2007) and 'civil society' (Backer 2003; UN Secretary General 2004). Therefore, individuals involved in conflicts are often generalised and categorised into homogeneous groups. Research and analysis often fails to recognise the various *individual actors* involved in these processes, both within the organisational structures and the groups for whom these programmes are designed. For example, Luc Huyse (2008) suggests that assessing tradition-based mechanisms by measuring programme legitimacy and effectiveness in particular communities. Approaching research in this manner prioritises the organisations and their programmes as the starting point of investigation, and is not as attentive to disaggregating the individuals involved in constructing and maintaining these organisations, the activities and interpretations of individual programme participants and, more simply, individuals' experiences outside these organisations in post-conflict periods. With this in mind, my thesis explores the following questions in the context of local transitional justice in Sierra Leone and the organisation Fambul Tok:

1. How and why do individual Sierra Leoneans engage with Fambul Tok's programme?
2. What does the Fambul Tok case study indicate about the construction of the 'local' and notions of ownership in transitional justice?

3. What do Sierra Leonean experiences more broadly indicate about processes of post-conflict transitions and justice?

Building on Shaw and Waldorf's approach, my research is 'place-based', defined as examining "the center from which the rest of the world is viewed" (Shaw and Waldorf 2010, 6) in order to examine the actual *activity* of Sierra Leonean individuals and how they creatively appropriated the Fambul Tok programmes, as well as engaged in mechanisms outside the institutional transitional justice scope and discourse. I will also analyse the various individuals involved in constructing and shaping how Fambul Tok operates and is represented to different audiences, to better understand dynamics amongst different Sierra Leoneans with attachments to different places, all of whom theoretically constitute the 'local'. My thesis will demonstrate how transitional justice processes are not only institutional, but also individual. I move away from discussions about 'societies' and normative questions of institutional effectiveness, and look more specifically at the activities of individual actors within these transitional justice processes. This illustrates the diverse means through which different individuals construct local transitional justice programmes as well as engage with them. In addition, individuals also employed unique unrecognised mechanisms in order to help themselves gradually move past their war-related experiences. I ultimately conclude that individuals had different perspectives and engaged in a diverse range of activities both in relation to Fambul Tok and outside of them. Therefore, it is not organisations that facilitate transitional justice processes, but rather individual agency.

Transitional Justice and Sierra Leone

Transitional justice mechanisms were initially state-centric institution-building exercises that aided post-authoritarian countries in transitioning to democracies. In the mid-1990s, this field expanded to incorporate a whole host of mechanisms in post-authoritarian as well as post-conflict states, commonly referred to as the transitional justice 'toolkit' (Hinton 2011; Sriram 2009; Shaw and Waldorf 2010), in order to support peaceful

transitions. It was, however, only in the 2000s that notions like the 'local,' 'ownership,' 'participation' and 'victim-centric' (Gready 2005; Lundy and McGovern 2008; Robins 2011; Sharp 2014; Shaw and Waldorf 2010) became more commonplace in transitional justice discourse and practice.

Sierra Leone is a particularly compelling case study because transitional justice mechanisms – most prominently the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) – were being implemented concurrent to these shifting discussions about the need for local dimensions to be incorporated into transitional justice processes and programmes. As a result, both the Special Court and the Truth Commission attempted to incorporate local components into their programmes and processes. While these particular institutions have been subject to intense scrutiny and academic research, other local programmes, such as Fambul Tok, have not been as extensively examined. Therefore, my thesis will make a contribution by examining the various individuals that constitute local transitional justice using Fambul Tok as the case study.

Fambul Tok is a Sierra Leonean non-governmental organisation founded in 2007 by Sierra Leonean human rights activist, John Caulker. Caulker, who was head of the Truth and Reconciliation Working Group in 2006, published a report that highlighted some of the ways in which the TRC had failed to adequately incorporate Sierra Leonean ownership and participation (Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission Working Group Report 2006). Creating Fambul Tok thus sought to fill the perceived reconciliation gap in rural areas that other transitional justice institutions had been unable or unwilling to do. The organisation facilitated bonfire ceremonies and afterwards, staff encouraged village members to form groups, such as communal farming or fish trading, to continue coming together. The organisation emphasised that reconciliation was not a one-time event, but a process that needed to be cultivated. The bonfire ceremony and the follow-up activities sought to restore communal relations and facilitate space to build unity that would ultimately bring peace and development to these villages. The organisation advocates for

processes to be designed and implemented by participants. However, people had different ideas about what they were seeking to obtain from the organisation and ultimately sought to capitalise on their presence through diverse means of appropriation.

Academic Engagement with Fambul Tok

To date, research on Fambul Tok has been relatively limited. Some scholars simply cite Fambul Tok as an example of a restorative justice mechanism (Lambourne 2016; Park 2010) as well as a programme that incorporates traditional rituals and reconciliation practices (Schotmans 2012; Sharp 2014; Sriram 2013). Despite having conducted fieldwork in Sierra Leone, none of these scholars or their research focused specifically on the organisation, and some of their evidence is based on second hand accounts. Park and Sriram, for example, largely rely on second hand correspondence and accounts from Laura Stovel, who attended a bonfire ceremony and wrote a description and brief analysis in the epilogue of her book entitled *Long Road Home: Building Reconciliation and Trust in Post-war Sierra Leone* (2010). While Stovel does make some interesting observations that certainly align with my own, particularly in relation to the bonfire ceremonies, her analysis is largely premised on a fairly normative understanding of justice in that public apologies and excuses such as 'it was war' are not enough. Rather, justice for victims must also be done: "perpetrators need to be gently but firmly guided by the community to accept responsibility and provide redress" (2010, 263). She does not interrogate the 'victim-perpetrator' grey zone at all and advocates for redress, thereby evaluating the programme's success based on normative views of how justice should be established. Thus, these scholars often use the organisation as an example of a local mechanism, but do not really question the fundamental assumptions upon which the organisation is premised, nor do they provide evidence of how the programmes occurred in practice.

Friedman (2015) and Iliff (2012) engage slightly more critically with Fambul Tok's programmes, questioning whether engaging with traditional chieftaincy structures may re-establish "pre-war patrimonial hierarchies and power structures" (Freidman: 2015, 70),

which were key causes of the civil conflict. Their critique is certainly valid but it is worth bearing in mind that traditional authority is not easily circumvented. Most non-governmental organisations working in these areas have chiefs or chieftaincy advisors, and so the extent to which Fambul Tok is more culpable of reinstituting pre-war hierarchies than any other organisations or programmes would be difficult to investigate. This critique is an example of just one aspect of many different power relationships occurring within the context of the organisation's programme. Further, while Friedman has done extensive fieldwork in Sierra Leone, her main research focused on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Iliff did not do any fieldwork but rather relied on Fambul Tok's media and a phone interview with the main donor, an American named Libby Hoffman. As a result, his ability to understand Sierra Leoneans' attitudes towards the programmes, or how the programmes actually unfolded, was incredibly limited.

There is only one substantial study on Fambul Tok, by Cilliers *et al.* (2016). This was a quantitative randomised control trial (RCT) study that surveyed approximately ten individuals in three waves over a 31-month period from 100 treatment communities with Fambul Tok and 100 control communities which had not had any contact with Fambul Tok. The surveys were conducted in five districts throughout Sierra Leone. The principle investigators were American-based economists but the project was run through a research non-profit organisation, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). Their data concluded that Fambul Tok's programme led to better social cohesion in treated communities but that individuals who participated in the bonfire ceremonies had worsened psychological health (Cilliers *et al*. 2016, 787). Their results differentiate the individual from the community to a certain extent. A quantitative approach, while broad in scope, does not provide any in-depth explanation of these results. The terms and concepts with which they are engaging, such as 'forgiveness', 'reconciliation' or 'trauma', are not easily measured and require intimate qualitative methods to really investigate how these programmes manifest, and why individuals respond in the ways that they do. Shifts in behaviour over time can be the result of different factors and depression and anxiety, particularly in impoverished villages, may relate to a multitude of factors. Furthermore, this study solely measured

Fambul Tok against its own goals and did not interrogate or examine other outcomes of the programme. My research pays much closer attention to the various individual actors due to the qualitative approach, wherein I conducted more flexible interviews myself (in contrast to the research cited above, which was conducted by enumerators) as well as observed the interaction between Fambul Tok staff and individuals in villages. The IPA study is, however, important to highlight because it actually had some influence on decisions about where Fambul Tok would work and how the programme would operate, calling into question the autonomy with which the organisation operated.

Much of the existing academic literature on Fambul Tok assumes that either the organisation is doing what they actually say they are doing, meaning that the organisation is facilitating locally owned reconciliation processes. The IPA study, for example, measured the extent to which Fambul Tok achieved what they have set out to do. None of this research interrogates the alternative manifestations of Fambul Tok's programmes or accounts for the role of individual agency in shaping them. Mitton (2015*b*) does highlight a few unintended consequences of Fambul Tok's programmes in his research on wartime atrocities. However, his evidence is anecdotal and like most other researchers who have written on Fambul Tok, a by-product of other research. My research, however, focuses on the organisation's actual activities, regardless of intention, and seeks to better delineate how the programmes are interpreted, and creatively appropriated by Sierra Leoneans, both the different individuals that design and implement these programmes as well as examining the participants and the circumstances in which the programme unfolds. This research goes beyond discussions of effectiveness and provides a more intimate and detailed discussion about how transitional justice actually occurs in particular settings and the diversity of individual engagement in these processes.

Thesis Argument and Outline

Incorporating local components, such as traditions and rituals, into programmes has been a means of facilitating ownership and legitimising transitional justice programmes in post-

conflict and post-authoritarian societies. In practice though, international development workers and local elites often design and implement mechanisms and ownership, with participation then being bolted on as an afterthought. Both the Special Court and the Truth Commission serve as examples of how public outreach is often needed in order to educate and sensitise people about these mechanisms, thereby demonstrating how these programmes are prioritising the institution and defining what Sierra Leoneans need (Friedman and Jillions 2015). These organisations and programmes are what I refer to as *recognised* mechanisms – official bodies and institutions with preconceived goals and processes that are already recognised and understood as part of the 'toolkit'. [2] Although Fambul Tok is frequently cited as local, it still operates as an institution, interacting with both international donors and Sierra Leonean villages and has a programme blueprint for each area.

Individuals in the villages where Fambul Tok work ultimately exercised their own agency to shape, or localise, these programmes, illustrating how these programmes did not always manifest in the manner they were intended by the organisation or how the programme is represented in their media. Rather, individuals capitalised on different aspects of Fambul Tok's programmes (see chapter five), demonstrating two points. Firstly, individuals in areas where Fambul Tok operated – *not* Fambul Tok staff – ultimately shaped and dictated how they benefitted from the programme. Second, individual appropriation illustrates the continued creativity of Sierra Leoneans in doing the best they can within their given circumstances, a characteristic also demonstrated during and just after the conflict (see chapters three and six).

Furthermore, the organisation itself is maintained and staffed by people from different regions and different socioeconomic statuses. The main donor who helped establish the organisation is an American philanthropist who has provided significant financial support

[2] A commonly used term in transitional justice that denotes the whole host of programmes implemented in post-conflict societies. Shaw and Waldorf as a "set of legal mechanisms and commemorative projects – war crimes prosecutions, truth commissions, purges of perpetrators, reparations, memories" (2010, 3).

but has also globally promoted the organisation's local image. The in-country staff is also diverse. Fambul Tok's executive director is part of a Sierra Leonean elite and distinguishes himself from the regional staff by largely remaining in Freetown, travelling abroad and maintaining a particularly serious demeanour in front of his staff. The district staff also distinguish themselves from villagers, such as by speaking Krio instead of the village language, to differentiate themselves from participants. Thus, my thesis further interrogates how the programme is represented to different audiences as well as how relational power dynamics play out in practice and what it means for different Sierra Leoneans, particularly the individual staff members and individual programme participants (see chapter four). In addition, in 2014 the organisation transformed its activities from addressing post-conflict grievances to undertaking more contemporary issues, such as the Ebola epidemic and other developmental adversities. However, much of the organisational narrative and representations of the 'local' remained the same. The last chapter (chapter seven) will explore how local transitional justice organisations themselves seek to transition while maintaining a similar narrative and purpose. This chapter will also continue to analyse the dynamics between individual participants, staff and the executive director.

Recognised mechanisms are, however, only part of the process. Individuals also engage in a variety of *unrecognised* mechanisms – processes outside the institutional transitional justice scope and discourse – that help them gradually move past their wartime experiences and often help individuals re-obtain a sense of normality in their everyday lives (see chapter six). By examining unrecognised mechanisms, my thesis deconstructs the notion of transition as an official start and end point and analyses how local transitional justice is made up of individual engagements that occur in multiple temporalities. There are a variety of ways in which people without access or interest in recognised mechanisms are able to reconcile or move past their war-related experiences. By examining both how recognised mechanisms are creatively appropriated by different Sierra Leoneans, as well as analysing other unrecognised mechanisms, the proceeding chapters will examine the many ways in which "transitional justice actually functions in [those] places and times

and attend[s] to local experiences, priorities, and practices" (Shaw and Waldorf 2010, 4). In so doing, it will go beyond discussions of 'societies', 'organisations' and 'programme effectiveness' and look more specifically at individuals and their different activities in times of transition and how justice can be enacted.

My thesis argues that transitional justice and reconciliation does not happen *to* or *for* post-conflict societies; rather, individuals and communities creatively engage with these programmes and produce processes that help them move past both war-related experiences and, in the case of Fambul Tok, other community issues as well. Re-framing the discussion in this manner helps to look beyond questions of what constitutes 'the local' and how ownership is facilitated and legitimised, to simply understand how individuals creatively appropriate programmes from local organisations as well as the various activities people engage with concurrent to, or in the absence of, recognised transitional justice mechanisms.

By examining these various activities of the 'local', understood as place-based, this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of how individuals shape transitional justice processes and programmes. It goes beyond understanding what individuals' priorities are and examines whose priorities take priority and the diverse nature of moving past war-related experiences. My thesis demonstrates how it is not transitional justice programmes that shape particular individuals or reconstitute individual behaviour, but rather that programmes or recognised mechanisms, including Fambul Tok, are shaped by pre-existing social, cultural and economic structures and by individuals situated within these structures.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first half examines the relevant literature, methodology and background on the conflict and post-conflict periods in Sierra Leone. Chapter one explores relevant transitional justice as well as peacebuilding literature to demonstrate the shifts from 'state-centric' to more localised discussions about how there remains a distinct gap of engaging with individual, versus societal, experiences.

Peacebuilding literature, which is based on similar foundational assumptions as transitional justice, has better interrogated some of these assumptions and thus is also a useful framework to incorporate into this thesis. Chapter two explains my qualitative research methods: semi-structured interviews, participant observation and discourse analysis. Chapter three provides a social and historical framework for the conflict and post-conflict eras in Sierra Leone, examining individual experiences of conflict and violence as well as how they creatively managed their circumstances during these periods.

The second half of the thesis will present the empirical data from Sierra Leone. Chapter four explores Fambul Tok's discourses about the 'local' and how the organisation is represented differently to different audiences. It attempts to delineate the various individuals that make up the organisation and what the different dynamics between these individuals say about the construction of the 'local' and ownership. Chapter five focuses on the creative appropriation of Fambul Tok's programme by individuals in rural villages where the organisation worked. Chapter six will examine *unrecognised* mechanisms and how these processes occurred outside recognised institutions. Chapter seven will explore Fambul Tok's transition to a new programme in the midst of the Ebola epidemic and how it retained similar narratives in relation to the 'local' and ownership. This chapter will again explore the various individual dynamics involved in the organisation's transition and what this case says more broadly about post-conflict institutions.

Chapter 1: Transitional Justice in Review

Introduction

This literature review demonstrates how transitional justice has practically and conceptually changed since its inception in the 1980s. There has not been a substantial focus on the dynamics between individuals that construct and maintain transitional justice programmes and processes and their beneficiaries, nor has there been much research about

how recognised programmes are appropriated. Therefore, the purpose of this review is twofold. First, I will illustrate how and why transitional justice mechanisms have transformed over time to become more 'local.' Second, I will analyse some of the key concepts and debates in relation to transitions, different types of justice (retributive, restorative, distributive and transformative) and the 'local' in order to interrogate some of the assumptions underpinning the discipline. Beginning with a brief examination of some of the initial debates and discussions occurring during the early years of transitional justice, I then discuss tribunals and retributive justice, before turning to truth commissions and restorative justice. I move to the current literature on local transitional justice and discuss how understanding the 'local' as "activity" provides a more holistic picture of the individual experiences of moving past war-related experiences. I then turn to examining some of the peacebuilding literature, which has recently become more critical of concepts that also pertain to transitional justice. Finally, I explore literature on socioeconomic and transformative justice. In reviewing this literature I highlight how recognised institutions are often the starting points of analysis, whereas this thesis intends to engage with the activity surrounding transitional justice programmes and institutions to better understand how they are used for a broad range of purposes.

The Early Years of Transitional Justice

Initial transitional justice debates largely excluded references to local context or focused on individuals affected by authoritarian regimes or violence. Transitional justice emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s[3] when many Latin American and Eastern European countries were transitioning from dictatorships to democracies. At the time, transitional justice referred to dealing with a specific category of crimes committed under repressive

[3] Some scholars would argue that transitional justice began much earlier. See for example, Elster, J. (2004); Teitel, R. (2003).

regimes. The two key goals were to provide some measure of justice for those who had suffered and to ensure stable democracies. However, as Neil Kritz's (1995) three-volume edited collection, *Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*, would suggest, transitioning towards and stabilising democratic states was the primary aim during this period. As a result, political compromises, such as blanket amnesty concessions, were commonplace. Peace and reconciliation were understood to be at odds with justice for victims or individuals of these regimes (Leebaw 2008; Orentlicher 2007).

This literature largely focused on the 'peace versus justice' debate, but more importantly for the purposes of this thesis is to highlight *who* was involved, or the level at which these discussions were taking place. These transitions were largely negotiated between elite diplomats, government officials and military regimes. As a result, "diplomats, political scientists and also some human rights activists argued that it was short-sighted to overwhelm newly installed, fragile civilian governments with demands for criminal prosecutions" (Roht-Arriaza 2006, 3). States and state officials were the central actors in advocating these conditions. Truth Commissions were implemented as a 'second-best' option in places like Argentina and Chile in order to do 'something for victims' (Ibid). In addition, it was assumed that the political transition to democracy would facilitate individual practices of democratic citizenship and reform the state security apparatus which indicated a particular optimism about the extent to which democratic transitions are capable of aiding individual experiences of state repression and violence (Arthur 2009, 357). In short, the early years of transitional justice privileged the stability of the state over individuals, whose needs and priorities were not considered. Fundamental assumptions about democracy and democratic citizenship went unquestioned and cultural and social contexts were not considered.

Ad Hoc Tribunals and Retributive Justice

In the mid-1990s, however, transitional justice mechanisms also began to redress crimes committed during periods of violent conflict. Therefore, the question of 'transition to what' also became a reference to a transition from conflict to peace (Leebaw 2008). In both the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, international criminal tribunals were established to hold individuals accountable for the atrocities committed during these conflicts. In so doing, these tribunals were attempting to contribute to the establishment of peace, demonstrating how the peace versus justice debate "largely shifted from whether to pursue some form of transitional justice, to what form it should take, what the degree of international involvement should be and who should be targeted" (Kerr and Mobekk 2007, 2; also see Nagy: 2008). From this period onward, it became widely accepted that peace and justice mutually reinforce one another.

The establishment of war crimes tribunals was one means through which justice was believed to (at least in part) aid individuals in their transition to peace. Criminal trials are a type of retributive justice in which victims and offenders are clearly delineated and punishment of offenders equates to justice. Criminal prosecutions are supposed to provide victims with a form of recognition for wrongs committed against them, hold individuals accountable without necessarily indicting entire groups, and deter future violence (Clark 2008; Moghalu 2004).

Firstly, tribunals were a mechanism that was supposed to contribute to national reconciliation and peace. As Kingsley Moghalu argues: "When justice is done, and seen to be done, it provides a catharsis for those physically or psychologically scarred by violations of international humanitarian law" (Moghalu 2004, 216). Accordingly, the knowledge that trials are occurring provides one way to societal reconciliation. In Security Council Resolution 955 that established the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda it was stated that the "prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law would enable this aim to be achieved and would contribute to the process of national reconciliation and to the restoration and maintenance of peace" (1994). Similarly, Carla Del Ponte, a prosecutor at the ICTY, stated that, "well-

administered justice does contribute even more than religion to long-term peace of mind for the victims and their families, which is a necessary prerequisite for reconciliation" (quoted in Clark 2008, 331). Therefore, these tribunals aimed to contribute to national reconciliation processes and transitions towards peace by holding a select few offenders accountable for crimes committed during these conflicts.

In addition, criminal tribunals also attempt to individualise guilt which "negat[es] the notion of collective guilt…Other members of the group to which a defendant or groups of defendants may belong are thus spared the weight of guilt for crimes…and are free to participate in national life on equal terms with others" (Moghalu 2004, 216). Kamari Clarke further points out how "international law has found a concrete Other: a singular perpetrator…whose agency can be severed only through external judiciaries and whose acts of violence are recontextualized…based on victim's justice" (2009, 108). By individualising guilt, only a few categorically defined perpetrators end up bearing the burden of responsibility for the crimes committed, allowing 'lesser offenders' the opportunity to be reintegrated into civic life.

Finally, the implementation of these tribunals, as well as the International Criminal Court, was also supposed to signify that "getting away with mass murder would no longer be the norm but the exception" (Peskin 2008, 5). These courts symbolised that individuals, regardless of their position, would be punished if they committed gross human rights violations. Therefore, tribunals are also a means of deterring violence and violations from occurring.

However, the ICTR and the ICTY, as well as the rationale underpinning these tribunals, have been heavily scrutinised. Firstly, there was an underlying assumption that justice was equated with courts and individualising justice. As Nicola Palmer (2015) points out, both these institutions did in fact have to go through a process of legitimising themselves, which would suggest that courts were not a self-evident form of justice. Their design and implementation were predicated upon liberal assumptions about how justice is understood

and the relationship between Courts and the people for whom they were created. Further, many individuals also did not necessarily understand the technical legal nature of these trials. Thus, if individuals cannot relate to the means through which justice is being facilitated it is difficult to imagine this could lead to any genuine form of societal reconciliation. Further, these tribunals were also physically removed from the areas where violence had occurred (the ICTY was located in The Hague while the ICTR was located in Arusha, Tanzania). Therefore, individuals were both physically and psychologically distanced from these tribunals (Gready 2005; Stover and Weinstein 2004).

The notion of individualising guilt is also problematic because, as Gary Bass argues, in so doing, it "becomes a *de facto* way of exonerating many of the guilty" (2000, 336). This may ultimately result in entire groups viewing each other as collectively guilty, which is "precisely [the] thinking that allows mass atrocities to occur in the first place" (Clark 2008, 336). The individuals who are on trial are often not the individuals who committed the physical violence against the victims for whom justice is being done. Holding a select few individuals accountable for crimes committed by a large number of individuals does not necessarily reconcile war-related experiences for victims. Further, the fact that guilty individuals may remain in the area where the crimes are committed and victims continue to see these people may do more to fuel anger and resentment than contribute to a sense of justice or reconciliation.

Further, evidence suggests that trials do little to deter violence and do not necessarily consolidate democratic states (Snyder and Vinjamuri 2003/2004). Since the ICTR, ICTY and ICC were established, new violent movements (such as Boko Haram and ISIS) and civil conflicts (such as in South Sudan, Central African Republic and Syria) have all begun in recent years, even after individuals have been tried and convicted of war crimes. As Payam Akhavan acknowledges: 'It is difficult to presume that ruthless warlords and genocidaires are rational actors who will invariably engage in a dispassionate analysis of whether atrocities are a cost-effective instrument of power in view of possible prosecution"

(2009, 629). Therefore, these tribunals cannot necessarily be relied upon as an effective means of deterring violence due to the diverse logics fuelling violence.

Criminal prosecutions, and retributive justice more generally, are therefore often problematic and do not necessarily provide justice or reconciliation for individuals. The ICTR and ICTY were designed by a group of (predominantly international) elites who understood justice to mean legal prosecutions. However, most individuals affected by conflict and violence did not participate in these criminal proceedings. Participation, it has been argued, plays a significant role in perceptions about these institutions. For example, Refik Hodzic (2010) argues that participation played a significant role in sentiments about the ICTY. Those who testified or were more closely involved with the Court had more positive perspectives, whereas uninvolved individuals were more sceptical of the Court. For the most part though, the physical and psychological removal of the tribunals acted as an obstacle to justice or reconciliation. In her book on the ICTY, Janine Clark argues that the ICTY has done little to contribute to reconciliation in Bosnia, Croatia or Kosovo but rather that peaceful coexistence is the result of pragmatism and the "practical demands of everyday life" (2014, 205). The notion that justice could have a broad range of meanings or that individuals need to be more directly involved in these processes was not reflected in discussions about international tribunals. As Bert Ingelaere points out in the case of Rwanda, people "simply prefer the justice of proximity" (2008, 51). These criticisms led practitioners to re-evaluate some aspects of the juridical model, which ultimately resulted in the creation of hybrid courts, like that in Sierra Leone (see chapter three).

The Significance of South Africa: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Restorative Justice and Ubuntu

Another critical moment during the mid-1990s was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. While I do not intend to interrogate the theoretical contours of 'truth' and 'reconciliation', it is important to examine the South African case study in order to establish important shifts in the transitional justice

framework. While truth commissions had been established as 'second-best' alternatives in Latin America, the South African Commission demonstrated that truth commissions could also be a legitimate alternative to judicial practices. Truth Commissions are temporary bodies set up to investigate human rights abuses and are often 'victim-centred' mechanisms that provide a forum for individuals to tell their stories and in so doing, obtain a sense of cathartic release. Truth commissions can also establish an official 'truth' narrative about the past, which can in turn provide closure for families of those who had been disappeared (Chapman and Ball 2001; Hayner 2002; Minow 1998). However, truth commissions are also based on a set of assumptions about the nature of truth and truth-telling as cathartic release. In addition, commissions, like courts, label individuals as 'victims' and 'perpetrators' and thus do not necessarily leave space for more nuanced individual experiences. These critiques will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone.

In 1995, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was established. This commission went beyond establishing a 'truth' about past violations (as the commissions of the 1980s had done) by invoking a language of reconciliation. Archbishop Desmond Tutu championed the term *Ubuntu*, which expressed a community based on reciprocity, respect for human dignity, cohesion and solidarity. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Report translates *Ubuntu* as 'humanness,' described by a Constitutional Court Justice as: "Its spirit emphasises respect for human dignity, marking a shift from confrontation to conciliation" (2002, Vol. 1, 127). Richard Wilson describes *Ubuntu* as an ideological concept where notions of human rights, restorative justice, reconciliation and nation-building converge under the umbrella of a populist pan-African rhetoric (2001, 13). By invoking this philosophy, the South African TRC "pointed to the need for more community-oriented jurisprudence that acknowledges the reality that individuals are part of a much larger social context" (Boraine 2000, 425).

The South African model has, broadly speaking, been considered a successful endeavour. For the purposes of this thesis the South African TRC is taken to represent two important

shifts in transitional justice discourse and practice. Firstly, invoking a reconciliation framework achieved similar goals to other transitional justice mechanisms, and demonstrated that truth commissions do not need to serve as a 'second best' option. Therefore, peace does not necessarily have to conflict with justice; rather reconciliation/restoration/peace can themselves be a form of justice. Secondly, the South African TRC was the first national transitional justice initiative to cite an indigenous concept in the name of 'culture' and 'tradition' and align it with a restorative justice framework (Daly and Sarkin 2007). The notion of aligning an indigenous concept with reconciliation generalised restorative justice as 'inherently African'. Framing particular mechanisms in the context of traditional and cultural values was a new and important shift in transitional justice that ultimately became very influential in future programmes and paved the way for local transitional justice.

Reconciliation is now one of many key concepts underlined in the transitional justice framework, particularly as the notion of 'transition' was re-framed to also encompass a war-to-peace scale. Fambul Tok frames much of its discourse in relation to reconciliation and so it is an important concept to explore and understand more broadly, specifically how it relates to transitional justice and local ownership. Conceptually, reconciliation incorporates a wide-ranging body of literature from various academic fields. Despite various interpretations of its meaning, reconciliation predominantly remains a Western-centric notion deriving from Judeo-Christian values, that has been adapted as a 'container concept' to discuss political and social processes after violent conflicts (Buckley-Zistel 2008, 139; also see Daly and Sarkin 2007). At its core, reconciliation can be understood as both a process and a goal that helps people heal (Parent 2010) by restoring social harmony or amicable relations between antagonists who have previously inflicted harm towards one another (Fisher 2001; Kreisberg 2000). As a process, reconciliation often employs participatory components such as truth-telling, acknowledgement and forgiveness that enable people to move beyond their animosity. On the individual level, "reconciliation is a process requiring empathy, forgiveness and altruism, it may or may

not be mandated, but rather interventions may lay the foundation for reconciliation to occur in the future" (Fletcher and Weinstein 2002, 623).

Reconciliation is commonly associated with restorative justice. Both of these concepts are framed as relational notions of justice, meaning that they aim to restore relationships that result from wrongdoing. These notions are also predicated upon the notion that these individuals are part of a larger community and crimes committed impact the community and the social fabric of society, not simply the individual. This is contrasted with retributive mechanisms, which seek to prosecute and punish an individual for particular crimes. Restorative justice takes a more holistic approach in an attempt to restore a community *as a whole*. The goal of restoring peaceful relationships is "nowhere as evident as in times of transition from conflict. Indeed, it is because the harm from wrongdoing extends beyond the individual victim(s) that the necessity of dealing with the past is felt so strongly, even by those not directly victimized by wrongdoing" (Llewellyn and Philpott 2014, 19). Therefore, reconciliation amongst communities (or villages), as Fambul Tok's programme attempted to facilitate, can be considered a form of justice.

In addition, restorative justice is also commonly associated with African customary legal systems and is often touted as a more 'localised' form of justice. For example, Joe Alie, a Sierra Leonean scholar, points out how "the ultimate goal of traditional justice systems among the Kpaa Mende (and indeed among most African communities) is reconciliation" (2008, 11). Like in South Africa, Fambul Tok has also underlined how restorative justice and reconciliation derive from local tradition. Therefore, the organisation's entire framework is based on notions of culture and tradition (a point elaborated on further in the next section). Joanna Quinn points out, though, that reconciliation can mean many different things to many different people (2009*a*, 5). Therefore, just because reconciliation is said to be local or associated with traditional justice mechanisms does not necessarily mean that the notion of reconciliation *itself* means the same thing to every individual. The 'local' constitutes a diverse group of individuals and thus, localising transitional justice should be explored through the lens of activity, not notions of culture and tradition.

Localising Transitional Justice

The relative success of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and harsh critiques of international tribunals in the late 1990s/early 2000s again shifted transitional justice discourses towards a recognition and incorporation of notions of 'local' and 'local ownership.' These terms have rapidly become central to transitional justice discourses and policy documents. One scholar points out that in the 1992 Agenda for Peace report, the word 'local' does not appear. However, in a 2011 UNDP Governance for Peace document the world 'local' appears 197 times (Mac Ginty 2015, 840). Local ownership has also been frequently cited as a necessary element in the transitional justice mechanisms (McEvoy and Eriksson 2006; Mobekk 2005). Lundy and McGovern state that it allows for the "ability of local people to define local obstacles or problems, conceptualise, initiate, design and implement programmes to address these problems" (2008, 109). Tailoring particular strategies to the unique experiences of villages will foster integration of cultural practices, promoting participation and a sense of ownership in the process (Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 2010). In addition, a 2004 United Nations report recognised that "approaches focusing only on one or another institution, or ignoring civil society or victims, will not be effective" (United Nations Security Council). Stover and Weinstein were amongst the first academics to acknowledge that transitional justice processes should be based on "consultative processes that incorporate the views and opinions of those most affected by violence" (2004, 335). These discourses demonstrate how terms like 'victims', the 'local' and 'civil society' have become more prolific and recognised in both policy and academia in the past fifteen years. However, employing broad terminology and language tends to treat groups as homogeneous and assumes that people had similar conflict-related experiences as well as similar priorities, needs, socioeconomic statuses and access to services and information.

Transitional justice institutions have also attempted to more substantively incorporate notions of the 'local' into these processes and programmes. Cited examples commonly

include East Timor, Rwanda and Uganda. After the 24-year long conflict in East Timor, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) was established. The Commission was a hybrid of concepts from criminal law, civil procedure, mediation and local traditional and spiritual practices and its purpose was to facilitate communal reconciliation (Burgess 2006; Kent 2012). In Rwanda, the Gacaca tribunals were established to address certain categories of crimes after the 1994 genocide. Gacaca was claimed to be historically a traditional conflict resolution mechanism revived to meet the needs of the post-genocidal state (Clark 2010; Ingelaere 2009; Nagy 2009). In Uganda, traditional Acholi rituals such as *Mato Oput* have been invoked as a means of delivering justice and reconciliation in accordance with alleged local ideas and experiences (Baines 2007; Finnstrom 2010; Quinn 2009*b*). In addition, other examples, such as Mozambique (Igrega 2012) and Guatemala (Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 2008) illustrate how, even in the absence of formalising local processes, scholars highlight traditional local rituals occurring as examples of how individuals and groups are moving past their war-related experiences.

These empirical examples demonstrate how transitional justice, a predominantly global discourse, has been substantively translated into local idioms (Merry 2006, 42). As Adam Branch points out:

> Many proponents of the traditional justice agenda argue that traditional justice in fact represents an indigenization of universal human rights standards and adheres to the same values and human rights protections as more orthodox forms of Western justice, but in a culturally authentic African idiom (2011, 155).

This is evident in the aforementioned examples. Institutions that have attempted to incorporate local ideas to promote 'ownership' have done this by employing components deriving from 'culture,' 'tradition' and 'local knowledge.' Further, even scholars who have examined cases outside the 'official' transitional justice scope (such as the research on Mozambique and Guatemala) also seem to focus on particular aspects of 'culture' or 'tradition,' such as rituals.

Scholars refute just how 'local' and 'traditional' these mechanisms actually are. In reference to Gacaca, while there are many criticisms that could be discussed, one relevant to this study is that Gacaca is not 'traditional' or 'local' and bears little resemblance to its original form (Waldorf 2010; Reyntjens and Vandeginste 2005) but rather serves as an arm of state control (Ingelaere 2009; Waldorf 2006). In fact, Barbara Oomen (2005, 902) points out that the donor community first proposed the idea that customary systems could be used to deal with the violations committed during the genocide. Therefore, the Gacaca initiative may not have been as 'home-grown' as many have believed. Similar critiques have been highlighted in reference to the Uganda case. Scholars argue that the *Matu Oput* rituals are not authentic and are also largely the product of the international donor community (Allen 2007; Branch 2011). Therefore, many of these debates tend to focus on the authenticity of these mechanisms. Scholars have not as readily engaged with how individuals engage and appropriate these processes and programmes to produce alternative outcomes.

Further, these critiques also do not necessarily interrogate the fundamental assumptions upon which these programmes are based. Other scholars have, however, explored some of these assumptions. For example, in the introduction to the edited volume *Localizing Transitional Justice*, Rosalind Shaw and Lars Waldorf argue that the 'local' is commonly framed as a level and is confined to a particular space, which "predisposes us to marginalize the experiences, understandings, and priorities of people within this residual space", and in so doing, "locality can provide no basis for knowledge beyond that of 'culture' or 'tradition', 'local knowledge' becomes conflated with 'tradition', while knowledge beyond 'tradition' must come from outside" (2010, 6). Adam Branch refers to this equivalence as ethnojustice, wherein the "fulfilment of justice is equated with the establishment of a traditional social order" (2011, 155). However, the notion that tradition is somehow stagnant, ahistorical and unchanging is seriously problematic because "as social and cultural changes occur, so do ways of confronting and organizing experience…When needs and perceptions shift…the inherited traditions cannot help but be apprehended and assimilated differently" (Gross 1992, 3). Codifying particular

ceremonies for the purposes of moving past war-related experiences means that many of these rituals lose their flexibility, which has so often defined 'traditional forms of justice.' Therefore, notions such as 'tradition' are as subject to change, contestation, plurality and negotiation as any other social process and therefore cannot necessarily be concrete defining features of the 'local.' Rather, Shaw and Waldorf suggest that the 'local' should be shifted to the centre "from which the rest of the world is viewed. The reality with which we have to begin…is that of a nuanced understanding of what justice, redress, and social reconstruction look like from a place-based standpoint" (2010, 6). In the context of this thesis, place-based is both a methodological and analytic approach that provides a good point of departure for examining both the recognised (Fambul Tok) and unrecognised mechanisms in Sierra Leone.

Understanding place is a complex concept that is frequently difficult to define. As Arturo Escobar points out "[I]t is impossible to provide a definition of place that works from all, and for all, perspectives" (2001, 152). However, for the purposes of this thesis, place is the *where* and the *what* of my research, and by engaging in the place-based approach it ultimately led to exploring the *how* and *why*. The first component of place refers to geographic area. Place is a "*location* or a site in space where an activity or object is located" (Agnew 2011, 326). This definition of place refers to physical spaces people inhabit (and simultaneously refers to the physical areas where I conducted my research). The second component is the occurrences within these spaces, or what the experiences of individuals are within a particular location (Escobar 2001, 140). Within such spaces exists "structures that enable and constrain agency…space is shaped by social interactions and at the same time it shapes these interactions" (Bjorkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2016, 3). Therefore, taking a place-based approach meant going to particular physical settings (or places), observing social structures and activity as well as engaging with individual perspectives and experiences, as understood from *their* particular vantage points.

By delineating two key dimensions of place, it further clarifies what the 'local' *is* and what is specifically being examined in this thesis. In line with how place is understood, I will

invoke Michael Lambek's definition of the 'local' as *activity*. When understood in this manner, the local's "spatial dimensions become fluid, dynamic, and multiple – and thereby hardly defining or confining" (2011, 216). He further goes on to state: "[T]his is not to say that space or place is irrelevant. In the end it is the dynamism of activity juxtaposed to the potency and attraction of place that animates the local" (Ibid). Understanding the 'local' through this lens does not confine it to space, tradition or culture but rather places a greater emphasis on the agency of individuals and stresses the diverse nature of needs, priorities and experiences. This thesis employed a place-based approach, by going to particular settings in order to observe and obtain perspectives from different vantage points, to understand the significance of these activities, interpretations, exchanges and productions of transitional justice processes. Examining the role of activity moves beyond assessing or measuring the effectiveness of particular programmes and simply seeks to look at how individuals engage with and appropriate these processes and programmes. As Phil Clark points out with regards to the *Gacaca* Courts, it is necessary to acknowledge the "importance of individual and communal agency in *Gacaca* and the vital role of the general population in running and shaping the institution" (2010, 87). Further, using a place-based approach to activity also allows for a more critical engagement of what counts *as* transitional justice by exploring individual engagements with unrecognised mechanisms, i.e. mechanisms outside the official transitional justice scope and discourse.

Understanding locality as activity also centralises the role of agency, and what this means for individual priorities, and in turn, engagement with both recognised and unrecognised mechanisms. Some authors, such as some of the contributors in Shaw and Waldorf's edited volume (see for example Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 2010), implicitly discuss agency and how people engage with or view particular programmes or institutions; however, there has been less explicit references and discussions about agency, and how structures influence how particular activities ultimately unfold. One exception to this is Annika Bjorkdahl and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic (2015) who more readily engage with theoretical aspects of structure and agency in a transitional justice context, arguing that

examining agency illustrates the creative, critical and transformative ways in which people deal with their war-related circumstances.

However, this piece largely focuses on female agency. This is perhaps unsurprising given that feminist scholarship has engaged extensively with the role female agency; in particular, scholars like Saba Mahmood (2001; 2011) and Lila Abu-Lughod (1998; 2002) have analysed how women in Middle Eastern societies, who are often perceived as powerless and dominated by male patriarchy, do in fact have significant agency, constantly navigating their circumstances and actively working within the bounds of the structures within which they live. This point is relevant to this thesis as well. While I do not intend to explore gender dynamics in depth, often the subjects of transitional justice are treated as passive victims (Madlingozi 2010). Thus, literature highlighting the role of agency points to an important and underdeveloped aspect in local transitional justice. Individuals employ their own agency in order to achieve their own goals.

It is also important to acknowledge the societal structures within which these individuals live and these activities occur. According to Anthony Giddens, agents and structures are not separate, but are constantly interacting and influencing one another, producing and reproducing social processes and outcomes (Giddens 1984). The process of structuration is key to defining locality, which is, as Lambek points out, constantly generating fluid and dynamic activities. These on-going interactions in turn continuously re-shape both structures and individuals. These processes will be exemplified and analysed throughout the empirical chapters, but particularly in chapter five, which explores the relationship between social structures, agency, appropriation and ownership.

In the context of Sierra Leone and the areas where I worked and interviewed, this means taking into consideration, both during research as well as analysis, critical societal structures, such as economic circumstances, social status (both within the community itself and Sierra Leone broadly) and religion. These structural components existed prior to Fambul Tok's arrival and were critical to everyday lives. They were critical to

understanding how individuals interpreted their surroundings, prioritised their goals and ultimately influenced the ways in which individuals would engage with recognised and unrecognised processes and programmes.

Further, examining unrecognised mechanisms entails a more broad and critical understanding of transitional justice that goes beyond a normative engagement with liberal, human rights-based discourses as well as the examination of formal processes and programmes. It also goes beyond looking at ceremonies or spectacles, also often associated local transitional justice. The term unrecognised mechanisms seeks to explore how *everyday activity* can also be a means of transition and justice. In the most basic sense, the everyday refers to the "most repeated actions, those most travelled journeys, those most inhabited spaces that make up, literally, the day to day. This is the landscape closest to us, the world most immediately met" (Highmore 2002, 1). The everyday is the site of the familiar where ordinary social interactions occur and daily routines happen. It is the "matter of fact reality of our existence" (Vigh 2006, 156). Some scholars argue (see for example Schirch 2005) that set-aside liminal spaces separate from everyday interaction are more symbolic and can serve as thresholds for moving past war-related experiences. However, it is within the everyday, i.e. the repeated actions of the day to day, that individuals must continue inhabiting and living. Therefore, the everyday is just as, if not more, important to examine in the context of transitions and justice.

There have only been a select few instances of this type of critical engagement. One notable example is the Special Issue in the *International Journal of Transitional Justice* that examines notions of transitional justice and the everyday. The articles examine some of the issues faced by individuals in different post-conflict and post-authoritarian circumstances and analyse how mechanisms are employed in everyday life to aid in social repair. As Alcala and Baines state in their editorial note, magnifying the everyday "brings to the forefront individual engagement" and "renders visible the many ways in which justice and repair are worked through, desired and aspired to in the everyday" (2012, 386). This issue is an important step in critically examining some of the foundations upon which

transitional justice is premised. It acknowledges that transitional justice processes are diverse and can occur outside official institutions and spectacles. However, this issue did not spark a particularly dramatic critical shift in transitional justice discourse and practice. Therefore, throughout this thesis I will continue interrogating these foundations in an effort to further critical thinking about transitional justice and what it means to localise these processes. One means of doing this will be to explore how the everyday, as sites of the mundane and routine, can also be understood as sites of transition.

Local transitional justice is still a relatively young subfield and has not yet critically interrogated many of the concepts upon which it is founded. This thesis, however, moves beyond simply advocating for the 'local' or local ownership, and looks at the actual activity of individuals that constitute the 'local', to better understand how these processes and programmes are already *owned* and become *owned* through appropriation. Due to the fact that I am taking a more critical approach, I will also explore some of the more recent peacebuilding literature because it has more substantively engaged in questioning not only the liberal assumptions underpinning the discipline, but also the more conceptual aspects of the 'local'.

Peacebuilding and the 'Local Turn'

Peacebuilding is most often defined by reference to the UN Agenda For Peace report, which defines it as an "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict" (1992, 6, para. 21). Throughout the 1990s, peacebuilding referred to various interventionist strategies that sought to sustain a liberal peace by creating democratic states "and the institutions that attenuate liberal behaviours" (Roberts 2011*a*, 9). Broadly speaking, peace was to be established and maintained in post-conflict societies through the promotion of democratisation, the rule of law, human rights, free and globalised markets and neoliberal development (Richmond 2006, 292). Examples of peacebuilding programmes include Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR)

and repatriation and resettlement of refugees, and the provision of assistance to programmes in relation to democracy, good governance and rule of law. While I do not intend to go into detail about each of these programmes, they serve to demonstrate how peacebuilding has historically, like transitional justice, been premised on a liberal framework. Thus, the trajectories of these fields are remarkably similar. Peacebuilding literature has, however, been far more critical of the foundational assumptions on which much of the programmes and concepts are premised and is, therefore, useful to in reference to examining the 'local' and transitional justice.

In the mid-1990s, when the transitional justice field expanded its mandate beyond authoritarian and repressive regimes to also include post-conflict states and transitions toward 'peace,' the frameworks for peacebuilding and transitional justice became complimentary. However, it has only been more recently that scholars have begun engaging in the overlap between these two fields (Sriram *et al.* 2013; Sharp 2014; Baker and Obradovic-Wochnik 2016). While many of the peacebuilding and transitional justice institutions and programmes have remained relatively enveloped in their respective fields (i.e. truth commissions and tribunals are part of transitional justice and DDR and SSR are part of peacebuilding), both the disciplinary discourses as well as the programmes themselves seem to work towards similar goals of 'justice', 'peace' and 'reconciliation.'

In addition, both fields have frequently been criticised as being too externally-driven and implemented in a top-down manner that places the state as the focal point, largely excluding local considerations or practices (Sharp 2014). In response, both fields have highlighted some of the same institutions and programmes in order to discuss local, traditional or indigenous components of these processes. For example, Roger Mac Ginty uses the Gacaca Courts in Rwanda (more commonly discussed in local transitional justice literature) as a primary example of the complexities of local mechanisms, in a book on peacebuilding. The book highlights similar debates and discussions explored in local transitional justice, including the extent to which the programme is really indigenous, the effectiveness of traditional approaches, and clashes between the 'local' and universal

human rights principles (2011, 49). This exemplifies the overlap of transitional justice and peacebuilding processes and programmes, as well as the similarity of the debates in each respective discipline.

Prior to exploring literature exemplifying a more critical 'local' turn, it is worth briefly highlighting how local ownership is conceptualised in peacebuilding literature. As mentioned in the previous section, transitional justice literature often invokes local ownership as a necessary component with which institutions and programmes should engage; however, the literature falls short in conceptually defining what exactly the concept means and how it can be facilitated in practice. Peacebuilding scholars have attempted to conceptually engage with local ownership to a much greater extent. Simon Chesterman discusses how the term should not necessarily be understood literally because often the practitioners advocating this notion are external. Rather, local ownership is a figurative term that refers to a ''buy-in'…the vague way [to understand] a relationship between stakeholders, with means ranging from a sense of attachment to a programme or operation, to (rarely) actually controlling authority" (2007, 4). A more maximalist view would argue that local actors design, manage and implement these programmes, rather than international actors (Nathan 2007, 4). Timothy Donais argues that neither position is entirely convincing, stating that on the one hand, expecting local actors to embrace externally imposed norms is neither realistic nor productive, as it leads to thinly rooted, minimally impactful governing practice. On the other hand, if local actors could "manage their own problems, there would be no need for external intervention in the first place" (2015, 41).

Even in recent literature, these discourses continue to take much for granted. In Ozerdem and Lee's recent edited volume *Local Ownership and Peacebuilding* (2015), much of their contributors' discussions (including Donais') are predicated on the need for particular liberal institutions and the role of institutional – largely governmental – structures. These discourses do not necessarily interrogate the foundations on which the institutions and structures are premised. Rather, peacebuilding programmes commonly employ local

ownership as a 'rhetorical device' (Richmond: 2012, 362) or 'lip service' (Boege *et al.* 2009, 611) but in actuality, they do not consult individuals affected by conflict and violence. Even from a more maximalist perspective, the local actors who design and implement these programmes are often elites who have not always had the same experiences of conflict and violence. Therefore, this discourse does not necessarily interrogate local hierarchies and individual experiences.

Peacebuilding literature has, however, moved beyond these local ownership discourses to more critical questions, such as exploring the relationship between local and international actors and manifestations of hybridity, how agency is employed, the role of the 'everyday' and different modes of resistance. This shift is often referred to as the 'local turn in peacebuilding.' Roger Mac Ginty points out how there is an assumption of a trickle-down or 'transmission chain' (2011, 33) effect that occurs when international organisations, states and financial institutions fund national governments, INGOs, and NGOs whose programmes are enacted in their operational areas. Different local and international actors interact within these processes and programmes, which ultimately manifests as a hybrid that captures the "dynamism associated with peace, conflict and the interaction between local and international actors" (Mac Ginty 2011, 208). This hybridity suggests that programmes and processes are not purely international or local but manifest as a combination of different actors' interventions and interpretations.

One of the key concepts underlying the critical peacebuilding literature is the role of agency within these processes. As Elisa Randazzo summarises, what the "local turn perspectives have in common are their portrayal as a social plane of agency and meaning that can be accessed, and indeed should be accessed, to engage with local realities and concerns beyond the mere realm of 'high' politics and institutional set-ups" (Randazzo 2016, 1355). Stefanie Kappler discusses how these programmes have a tendency to treat people as recipients of what is being imposed and argues that individuals are not just "passive victims, but they may act as the creators of their own history, thus exercising their agency" (2014, 3). Kappler is one of the first in either transitional justice or

peacebuilding to really focus on agency as the vehicle that enacts post-conflict processes and programmes. Highlighting agency is critical because it goes beyond 'local ownership,' which seems to suggest the ways in which external processes *become* owned by particular individuals or societies and highlights how people actually engage with and appropriate these processes and programmes.

David Chandler argues that, while the importance of local agency and capacity should certainly be acknowledged in the peacebuilding framework, these "non-linear discourses of local 'hidden' agency neither create the basis of any genuine understanding of the limits to liberal peace nor provide any emancipatory alternative" (2013, 31). He emphasises how many of these discourses are premised on ideology and that they do not account for the material social and economic explanations that often limit these aspirations (2013, 32). I would argue, however, that focusing on individual agency allows for the individual to be the starting point of investigation, rather than foregrounding the legitimacy and effectiveness of particular programmes. Exploring individual agency of different actors underscores the diversity of how different people engage in these processes, from international donors to local elites to district staff to the villagers themselves. All of these individuals have agency that ultimately produce the actual programmes. While Kappler's book does an excellent job at highlighting agency, her case studies in Bosnia, Cyprus and South Africa focus mainly (although not entirely) on recognised, particularly artistic, spaces and programmes such as galleries and museums. My thesis attempts to go beyond these recognised arenas and explore how individuals, particularly villagers, engaged in unrecognised mechanisms that helped them cope and move past their war-related experiences. Furthermore, empirically engaging with individual agency in employing recognised *and* unrecognised mechanisms in Sierra Leone addresses Chandler's ideology critique. In the following chapters I will analyse many of the material social and economic realities of these local processes and programmes to demonstrate that agency is not in fact an empty concept but critical to understanding how these processes actually occur.

Examining the role of agency has been notably absent in transitional justice scholarship. As discussed in the previous section, scholars seeking to engage with the 'local' have largely used discourses of participation and local ownership (Lundy and McGovern 2008; McEvoy and Eriksson 2006; Mobekk 2005) which does not really go beyond examining recognised mechanisms. A few scholars, such as McEvoy and McConnachie (2013) and Robins (2013), have highlighted the role of agency, but these articles are largely in reference to the victims of violence. As discussed above, categorising victims tends to create hierarchies of experiences and thus excludes many other individuals indirectly impacted by conflict and violence. In addition, the 'victim' label itself carries a particular implication of passivity, that individuals are simply the subjects of conflict and violence and can only overcome this status with some kind of external support. However, by employing the place-based approach, we can move beyond narratives about 'delivering justice' for individuals and look at the role of individual agency in these processes.

While the 'everyday' has been underlined in transitional justice (see previous section), peacebuilding literature has more comprehensively engaged with the 'everyday' as an important reference to 'sites of agency' or 'the medium by which agency is enabled' (Richmond 2009, 332). In this sense the 'everyday' constitutes a particular setting in which the activities that make up the day to day are occurring. Exploring the everyday offers insight into the various ways in which individuals are able to creatively engage in transitional processes in the absence of, or lack of desire to engage with, recognised mechanisms. Peacebuilding scholar David Roberts states that by researching the everyday, we can highlight:

> The myriad socially sanctioned ways in which, to secure their being, people outsmart their environmental limitations and manage the gaps between constraints and aspirations in the face of inadequate, disinterested and incompetent authority and power. It refers to the ways people make their lives the best they can, manipulating with whatever tools and tactics are at their disposal the surrounding natural, social, economic and political structures, local and global, that empower and constrain their lives (Roberts: 2011*b*, 412-3).

This underscores the importance of the everyday in transitional justice and peacebuilding processes, whether as a site of agency, or as agency itself. Shifting the focus to the

everyday, or ordinary, then centralises the setting in which agency and activities are occurring. In chapter six, I explore some of Roberts' concepts as part of the analysis on 'unrecognised mechanisms' and the transition to 'normality' that was frequently stated as a desired goal just after the conflict. I intend to engage with both the transitional justice Special Issue (Alcala and Baines 2012) as well as some of the critical peacebuilding literature to analyse the everyday, which can be useful for understanding the diverse nature of activities and engagements of the 'local' and transitional justice.

The final framework often employed in 'local' turn peacebuilding discourses that I will explore is that of resistance. Resistance of the 'liberal peace' has been another common analytical lens in critical peacebuilding literature. For example, in their edited book *Hybrid Forms of Peace* Oliver Richmond and Audra Mitchell employ a theoretical framework that "accommodate[s] the range of customs, practices and unexpected forms of resistance that may be found in the realm of the local" (2012, 33) with a particular emphasis on 'the everyday.' Much of the book relies on literature deriving from academics such as Michel De Certeau (1984) and James C. Scott (1990) and contextualises how individuals engage in subtle forms of resistance contrary to the peacebuilding apparatus. As Roland Bleiker notes in the conclusion: "Wherever peacebuilding takes place, there is resistance to it" (2012, 296). Critics of this discourse, however, suggest that concepts such as resistance (and hybridity) reify the international and local, running 'fundamentally contrary to the local turn's initial objective of pluralising the everyday and focusing on 'interconnectedness'' (Randazzo 2016, 1356; also see Chandler 2013; Paffenholtz 2015).

I do not find resistance to be a particularly useful analytical framework to examine Fambul Tok's programme. In addition to reifying the 'local' and 'international,' definitions of resistance have become so broad that it can refer to virtually any action, practice or mechanism that occurs concurrent to or is at odds with a formal (or recognised) process or programme. As Saba Mahmood points out in her book *Politics of Piety*, an analysis through a lens of resistance "flattens out an entire dimension of the force [a] movement

commands and the transformations it has spawned within the social and political fields" (2005, 175). Referring to acts as resistant also risks overlooking the diverse nature of experiences with particular programmes and processes. Some individuals may enthusiastically participate, others may outright protest, some may simply ignore it, while others may find creative means of appropriation. This framework simply does not provide the nuance necessary for the analysis of Fambul Tok and individual Sierra Leonean experiences. Many Sierra Leoneans did *accept* (and did not resist) Fambul Tok as an organisation to be present in their village but their experiences with the bonfire ceremony and the organisation were diverse. Fambul Tok's Programme was not always used for its intended purpose but rather, individual Sierra Leoneans consciously cherry picked and moulded Fambul Tok's programmes to suit their own needs and priorities, demonstrating the critical role of agency in this process.

This 'local' turn in peacebuilding highlights a fundamental shift in post-conflict studies. These studies do not simply recognise the 'local' as a critical piece of the puzzle but rather engage in the complexities of contested power dynamics through concepts like hybridity, agency, the everyday and resistance. Concepts like agency and the everyday are useful for examining the Fambul Tok case study and, more broadly, local transitional justice because they ultimately "emancipate the field from the bonds of the paradigmatic transition" (Sharp 2014, 19). Peacebuilding has better interrogated many of the liberal concepts on which post-conflict studies, including transitional justice, are often premised. While the place-based approach is my main analytical framework, underscoring some of the conceptual discussions on agency and the everyday in critical peacebuilding literature will allow for a more comprehensive analysis of Fambul Tok, the 'local' and transitional justice.

Socioeconomic (or Distributive) Justice

As the definitions of both 'transition' and 'justice' have expanded to include a wide range of meanings, transitional justice mechanisms have also begun to address a multitude of

social and economic issues that occurred prior to and during periods of conflict and repression. Reparations programmes have commonly been implemented to provide victims different forms of compensation for physical or psychological harm inflicted during these periods (Laplante 2014). Socioeconomic issues associated with the conflict itself are important to highlight, particularly in the case of Sierra Leone. As exemplified in the empirical chapters that follow, these everyday concerns were far more relevant to individual understandings of what aided them in moving past their war-related related experiences. For many Sierra Leoneans, rebuilding homes and addressing economic losses from the conflict was symbolic of transition. However, reparations are often formal programmes implemented by the state. Programmes often only aid individuals who had particularly heinous crimes committed against them, thereby creating a 'hierarchy of victims' (see McEvoy and McConnachie 2013). In Sierra Leone, for example, reparations were supposed to be distributed to victims of the most heinous crimes, including amputation and sexual abuse. However, most, if not all, individuals during the conflict were impacted in some form or another. Therefore, placing a monetary compensatory value on individual suffering acknowledges certain types of suffering while ignoring/denigrating others. Most Sierra Leoneans were economically impacted by the conflict.

Furthermore, the literature on post-conflict socioeconomic issues has also begun to acknowledge that "injustice is not just a consequence of conflict, but is also often a cause of conflict" (Mani 2002, 5). In her 2002 book *Beyond Retribution*, Rama Mani outlines three dimensions of justice: legal, rectificatory and distributive, ultimately arguing that justice should not only address the violence and repression that occurred during a particular period. Justice should also address the underlying social, political and/or economic issues that *led* to violence and repression. Pablo de Grieff describes how systematic human rights violations, whether in an armed conflict or a repressive regime, are a symptom of weak general norms (2009, 45). Therefore, transitional justice mechanisms should also seek to address these underlying structural issues that led to a state of serious human rights violations. While these issues certainly cannot and should

not be ignored in post-conflict or post-authoritarian societies, the question becomes: where does transitional justice 'end' and where does more general development 'begin'?

As discussed in chapter six, defining official end points of a conflict and start points of a transition is difficult, in large part due to the broad range of individual experiences. At what point a transition ends is also rather ambiguous because if you include the need to address underlying war-related issues, the word transition becomes a misnomer. These types of issues often require long-term social, political and economic restructuring. Therefore, for the purposes of *some* simplicity, I would argue that transitional justice programmes should directly correlate to experiences that occurred during the conflict or authoritarian regime. As Lars Waldorf notes:

> This is not to deny the importance of addressing past and present socio-economic inequalities as a matter of both justice and potential conflict prevention. But that that should be done through democratic politics and distributive justice…Well-meaning efforts to have transitional justice tackle socio-economic wrongs will simply freight it with yet more unrealizable expectations (2012, 9).

Underlying issues should certainly be investigated and addressed, but transitional justice cannot be everything. Mechanisms should indeed be based on the desires and priorities of the individuals involved in conflict and violence and can indeed be diverse, but these mechanisms should be directly addressing the violations that occurred during periods of conflict and repression.

Transformative Justice

A more recent thread of literature has attempted to combine many of the aforementioned critiques, particularly with regard to the centring of victims and participation. Scholars have suggested 'transformative justice' to be a more apt framework to address all the different needs of post-conflict societies (Lambourne 2009; Gready and Robins 2014). This framework, largely derived from the peacebuilding literature, rethinks the notion of transition as a temporary period linking the past and future, and looks at how societies can

more holistically 'transform' through longer term, multifaceted sustainable processes that address political, economic, psychosocial and legal dimensions (Lambourne 2009). It "emphasizes local agency and resources, prioritization of process rather than preconceived outcomes" and "entails a shift in focus from legal to the social and political and from states and institutions to communities and everyday concerns" (Gready and Robins 2014, 340). Gready and Robins further suggest that this approach requires rethinking the role of outsiders and how they intervene, arguing that it is about creating space for locally led transformation and facilitating change by accessing material and intellectual resources without necessarily "imposing external agendas" (360). Transformative justice addresses some of the critiques frequently highlighted in transitional justice literature and in many ways reflects the local transitional justice framework. In Gready and Robin's article, much of their discussion focuses on local approaches and advocates for participation and an examination of everyday concerns. The framework is good in the sense that it seeks to question not just transitional justice mechanisms but also the structural inequalities that often underscore them. I also find their emphasis on process over outcome compelling because it does indicate recognition of what is actually happening, as opposed to what the stated intentions of particular programmes might be.

There are, however, also problems with this framework. To their credit, these academics readily admit that transformative justice is still in an infant stage. While these scholars do acknowledge structural inequalities and various power dynamics between international and local entities, they also fall into the trap of treating the local as a homogeneous fixed category, and do not disaggregate it into the various individuals involved in these processes and programmes, thereby making some of the same presumptions that they claim to be critiquing. Second, while I agree that emphasis on processes over outcomes is good, the authors still seem to suggest that recognised programmes and institutions should be created for the purposes of aiding these individuals, rather than examining what is already occurring and how people are able to employ alternative modes of moving past their experiences. In so doing, one can see that individuals do in fact have preconceived goals about transitions and transformations. Finally, as mentioned above, this framework

may be attempting to do too much by addressing both war-related and underlying structural issues. This is yet another framework that muddies the already complex and contested post-conflict literature. Rather, it is more useful to examine the actual activities occurring between different individuals in order to better understand what is actually happening and how people diversely engage with both recognised and unrecognised mechanisms that aid them in moving past their war-related experiences.

Conclusion

This literature review has provided an overview of how the field has focused more on the local because of the shift towards promoting local institutions. It has attempted to interrogate some of the prominent discourses in reference to transition, justice, and most importantly, the local. While transitional justice discourses have evolved to recognise the need for local participation and local ownership, ideas of *how* this actually occurs in practice continue to be based on romanticised notions of culture and tradition. Further, local transitional justice programmes are often measured against their own goals and priorities, as opposed to simply looking at the ways in which people engage with recognised and unrecognised mechanisms. Finally, discourse and practice continue to place war-affected populations within categories, such as 'victims', 'perpetrators' and 'civil society.' As Anna MacDonald has rightly pointed out: "We still have a very rudimentary understanding of how these interventions *actually* affect people in the fragile and war-affected places where atrocities have been perpetrated and experienced" (2015, 75). This is one gap I intend to fill in this thesis by examining individual engagements with Fambul Tok as well as alternative and unrecognised transitional mechanisms employed by villagers.

Fambul Tok is framed through the local transitional justice lens *first and foremost* because the ideas and conception were generated in reaction to what the TRC, a tried and true *transitional justice* mechanism, did not accomplish. Their DVD and other materials also contrast it to the Special Court. However, much of its discourse engages with notions of

peace and reconciliation and thus, it is important to explore other disciplines, such as peacebuilding, alongside transitional justice literature. Therefore, by using Fambul Tok as a case study and employing different post-conflict literatures, this thesis examines the diverse engagements of individuals with Fambul Tok's programme, as well as with unrecognised mechanisms, in order to empirically and critically contribute to the field of local transitional justice.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Introduction

This thesis examines the role of individuals in local transitional justice processes through the lens of the Fambul Tok case study. Unlike Huyse (2008), who suggest measuring the legitimacy and effectiveness of tradition-based mechanisms, this thesis questions the fundamental assumptions on which 'local' mechanisms are premised. Instead of using a particular programme as the starting point of investigation, this thesis examines individual actors and the diverse ways with which they engage in transitional justice processes and programmes. The organisation was selected because it is characteristic of a local transitional justice and reconciliation organisation. Its staff are Sierra Leonean, it places a significant emphasis on local ownership of its programmes, and it facilitates a 'traditional' bonfire ceremony for individuals to speak and reconcile their war-related experiences. Fambul Tok is also frequently cited in the academic literature as an example of a local programme (Cilliers *et al.*: 2016; Friedman: 2015; Iliff: 2012; Lambourne: 2016; Mitton: 2015*b*; Park: 2010; Schotmans: 2012; Sharp: 2014; Sriram: 2013; Stovel: 2010). Yet, there is little empirical research that has analysed the various facets of the organisation, including how it is structured, what its discourses are and how it is being interpreted by participants, why community members are motivated to participate and how they appropriate these programmes. In doing this research I sought to fill both empirical and conceptual gaps and investigate how exactly the organisation and its programmes operate in practice, and what the implications from this case study are for the local transitional justice literature. By exploring how processes and programmes are in fact produced, I further highlight the diverse and individualised nature of activities and engagement in these programmes, as well as transitional justice more broadly.

I used a combination of various qualitative methods to thoroughly investigate and analyse the organisation and its relationship to concepts such as the 'local' and 'ownership'. Due to its interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature, the transitional justice framework easily lends itself to a combination of different approaches. Christine Bell notes how the two

main thrusts in transitional justice research are the conceptual (involving attempts to examine links between transitional justice and a broad range of other goals) and the empirical (attempts to research and 'measure' the relationship between transitional justice and its asserted goals) (2009, 10-11). This research uses the empirical evidence from different qualitative approaches to examine the actual activity of communities in order to contribute to some of the conceptual debates within the transitional justice framework; it combines these thrusts to provide a 'thick' exploration of transitional justice (McEvoy 2008, 17). This means dismissing many of the formal, normative assumptions underpinning transitional justice and engaging with the complex dimensions and interactions occurring on the ground.

Examining various facets of an organisation also calls for different methodological approaches. I wanted to obtain a comprehensive overview of the different individuals involved in creating and maintaining the organisation and its programmes. This includes their relationships to international partners such as Catalyst for Peace executive Libby Hoffman, district staff engagement in rural communities, and the perspectives of villagers. In the context of transitional justice, 'local' commonly refers to ideas and experiences from the country in which these processes are being implemented, or 'national ownership.' In other words, Sierra Leone as a nation (or geographic space) equates to 'local'. In *Localizing Transitional Justice* though, Shaw and Waldorf understand the 'local' as place-based, the point "from which the rest of the world is viewed" (2010, 6). As discussed in the previous chapter, I understand place to be a location in which activities are occurring and so approaching my research as 'place-based' meant going to particular settings and understanding the perspectives from different Sierra Leoneans vantage points, or centralising these individuals and the world view that arises from their particular perspectives, rooted in particular places and the activities an interactions occurring in this space. These individual perspectives were, however, based on the time and place events were occurring, which ultimately highlighted how the activities that make up the 'local' are a complex constructed category. Exploring these dynamics provided valuable insight

into the different actors that ultimately constitute the activities that make up local transitional justice.

Research Overview and Design

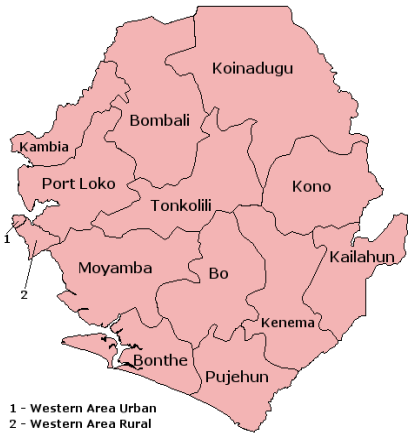
I conducted eight months of PhD fieldwork during two separate trips. The majority of research was done between December, 2013 and June, 2014, with a shorter follow up trip for one month from December, 2015 to January, 2016. The main research trip was cut short due to the outbreak of Ebola in late May, 2014. However, the majority of data had been collected by this point in time and it did not significantly compromise the extent of my findings. I had also been to Sierra Leone prior to the initial fieldwork trip from May to August, 2012. During this period I served as an intern for Fambul Tok and thus had already established a good working relationship with Fambul Tok.

Upon return in 2013, while not attached to the organisation, I had permission to conduct research with the organisation. This did of course require negotiation from time to time through informal conversation with the director as well as consistent contact with the district manager. After some time, I provided a research plan to Fambul Tok's Director, John Caulker (see Appendix C), and after this was approved, I predominantly worked with the District Coordinator, Joseph, who proved to be very accommodating and graciously accepting of the research plan.

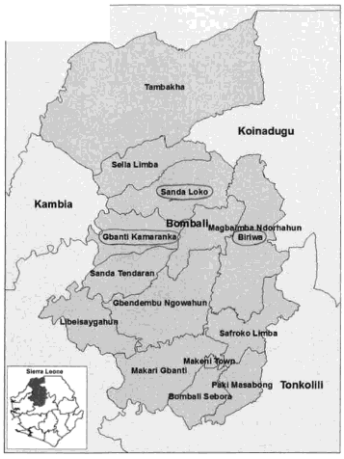
At the time of research, Fambul Tok was operating in five districts: Kailahun, Kono, Koinadugu, Bombali and Moyamba (see figure 1.1 below). (They now also operate in Pujehun). Of these, I identified two potential districts, Kailahun and Bombali. Kailahun is well known in conflict-related literature because it was where the conflict began and where the main rebel force, the Revolutionary United Front, was based. By contrast, Bombali citizens experienced the conflict much differently to the rest of the country, due to the fact that the rebels entered the district much later. The district became more significant in the final years of the conflict. I chose to work in Bombali district because

of their unique experience during the conflict (see next chapter), which ultimately proved interesting and fruitful for the analysis of Fambul Tok's programmes and what it meant to localise transitional justice processes. In addition, logistical concerns, such as housing, roads, transportation availability, connections to research assistants and pre-established relations to district staff, also factored into this choice. I was based in the district capital, Makeni, but made periodic trips to, and stayed in, villages all over the district.

Sierra Leone Maps



1.1 Sierra Leone District Map, Source: Statistics Sierra Leone 2014



1.2 Bombali Chieftaincy Map, Source: Bombali District Council 2014

I employed three qualitative methods – participant observation, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis. I conducted the research in two separate phases. From January to March 2014, I travelled with Fambul Tok employees, who were at the time predominantly working in Gbanti Kamaranka and Sanda Loko chiefdoms, to observe their interaction with villages and witness bonfire ceremonies. From April to June I conducted semi-structured interviews in five different village areas in Gbanti Kamaranka, Sanda Loko and Biriwa chiefdoms (see map 1.2 above). I conducted interviews in three separate groups of communities, chosen based on their relationship to Fambul Tok. The first group of interviews were conducted in communities that had not had any encounter with the Fambul Tok programme. I chose to conduct these in two larger communities in Biriwa chiefdom, Bumban and Karina sections, because the organisation did not have any

programmes in this chiefdom. The selection of case study choices was predominantly based on where the organisation was working during that period. However, I used a place-based approach in each community and engaged with these perspectives in my analysis.

The second group of interviews were conducted in communities that had only recently established a relationship with Fambul Tok and had held a bonfire ceremony. I again conducted interviews in two communities: Makulon and Makomray sections in Gbanti Kamaranka chiefdom. The selection was based on which villages I had observed during the initial phase. The third group of interviewees was in an area that had an already established relationship with Fambul Tok and had participated in their follow up community development programmes. Benia section, Sanda Loko chiefdom, was selected based on a discussion with Fambul Tok's district coordinator, Joseph. I was, however, only able to conduct interviews in one section in the last group due to the Ebola constraints. The research was designed in this manner to understand how Fambul Tok's programmes were appropriated by individuals and whether there were substantial differences in how people dealt with their war-related experiences in areas that had had contact with the organisation and areas that had not had any contact, particularly in relation to moving past individual war-related experiences. The following sections will go into further detail about how I conducted each of these qualitative approaches, namely participant observation, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis.

Participant Observation with Fambul Tok Staff

Participant observation, which involves a researcher partaking in "the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group" (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, 1), is not a particularly new approach to researching NGOs. Development practitioners, anthropologists and social scientists have employed participant observation to gain a better understanding of the tacit relationships between the various actors, such as donors, employees and participants involved in these processes and programmes. As Lisa Markowitz, who conducted research with NGOs in Peru, points out:

> Grounding research in the day-to-day work of NGO staff allows identification of the ways quotidian matters and interorganizational relations affect the design, presentation and implementation of projects, and the assumptions embedded within them. Such attention to situated practice also provides an antidote to the generalizations made about NGOs by their advocates and detractors (2001, 42).

By observing meetings between Fambul Tok staff and village participants, the bonfire ceremony and informal aspects surrounding the Fambul Tok 'intervention,' I was able to see the implementation process first hand. I was able to record many of the mundane aspects of the programme that could not be obtained through staff interviews, participant interviews or through Fambul Tok's media. Prior to the bonfire ceremony I attended meetings which enabled me to hear just how the organisation constructed and conveyed its own narrative of the war; at the ceremony itself I could see the reluctance of individuals to discuss their war-related experiences; staying in the villages also allowed me to see how Fambul Tok staff informally interacted with village members and, thus, see how power relations played out in practice.

Initially in January 2014, I attended meetings with the organisation in villages. Fambul Tok has several meetings with a particular village prior to the bonfire ceremony, in which staff discuss the purpose of the organisation with stakeholders, conduct trainings for section stakeholders, and make logistical preparations for the bonfire ceremony. I would travel with the district coordinator to these meetings and quietly observe how they transpired. The meetings were predominantly conducted in Krio, much of which I can understand. However, I frequently used another member of staff for translation purposes, or followed up after the meeting to ensure accuracy of the discussions for my record. In villages, I only wrote in notebooks and later transcribed them into word documents because in previous experiences in 2012 I found that tape recorders made people uncomfortable. I documented things like what the organisation was saying to village members – both the 'formal' script of how the staff presented the organisation and its purpose, but also the more 'informal' aspects, such as staff setting ground rules requesting that mobile phones be turned to silent and asking for villagers to be "active listeners". I documented how villagers reacted to Fambul Tok's presentation and questions villagers

asked the staff. I also noted the general meeting surroundings, as they were often in secluded spots under a tree and only with a select number of people, which ultimately led me to call into question how inclusive and participatory the programme really was, and prompted me to informally ask other non-included village members what their impressions were. I was thus able to see first-hand the interactions occurring between staff and villagers from a very early stage, and how these shaped the bonfire ceremony. Hearing these narratives, particularly some of the religious language invoked, also helped me to make sense of many of the answers provided in interviews later on.

The areas where Fambul Tok was working in 2013-2014 were hours from the capital. In addition, Fambul Tok staff often had various obligations in these areas and so I often stayed in the villages with staff. Staying in communities allowed for further observation and relationship-building prior to the bonfire ceremonies and follow-up interviews. It also provided valuable insight into how staff interacted with village members informally, and evidenced how and why individuals understood the organisation as 'unique' in comparison to other organisations. During my stays I would often walk around and engage in conversations with people, which ultimately aided in making me a familiar face prior to conducting interviews. Basic social skills and interactions cannot be underestimated in conducting this type of research (Jackson 1995, 21) and so by greeting different people, eating and drinking with them, playing games and attempting to speak their language I was able to gain some acceptance in villages. These conversations also aided in understanding contemporary communal issues, making me question the extent to which the conflict was still a relevant part of everyday life and, if not, in what ways had people been able to move past these experiences, or at least cope with them.

I also attended four bonfire ceremonies in Makomray, Makulon, Banka and Gbendembu sections over the course of March and April 2014. On the day of the ceremonies I would talk to people about the upcoming events of the evening. In addition, I would observe the morning meeting held between staff and village members involved in the planning, where the programme and meal preparation were discussed (see Appendix B for a sample of

notes). I would also spend time with the women while they were cooking the meal, sometimes chopping cassava leaves or doing other mundane tasks. Being with women during the cooking was one way I could capitalise on my gender, as I was able to observe the mood and get a sense of the conversations (although they were translated for me, often by the female Fambul Tok employee). The conversations were often trivial gossip but people would sing and dance, creating songs about the bonfire and Fambul Tok, which indicated a sense of excitement. This space was, however, not being used for discussions about war-related experiences. During the bonfire ceremonies, I would sit next to someone, either a village or staff member, who would translate the programme and war-related accounts for me. They were also helpful in explaining the dances and their meanings and purpose. I tried to remain discrete and did not speak out during these programmes.

By taking this particular approach to my research, I ultimately become somewhat embedded in the organisation. While there was a risk as being seen as part of the organisation by community members or perhaps being seen as biased, I felt the access outweighed the objectivity of a neutral observer. If I had not travelled with the organisation, I would have missed many of the meetings and informal interactions between staff and community members, of which became critical in my analysis of the organisation and delineating the hierarchies within local transitional justice. Further, I was always introduced at meetings as independent of the organisation. Interview data also suggested that this approach was not a hindrance, as the opinions and perspectives of informants in relation to the organisation were diverse and did not suggest a particular rehearsed narrative. Finally, this embeddedness did not shape my writing; while I have great appreciation for the organisation's assistance and did at times reflect on whether my relationship with the organisation and its staff did create any bias, I ultimately wrote and analysed my findings as objectively as possible, based on observation and interview data.

Participating in, and observing, Fambul Tok's programme as it unfolded was critical to answering my research questions. By employing this method I was able to understand

which individuals led and participated in the programmes, how certain people creatively appropriated the programmes and how Fambul Tok staff and villagers interacted, and what this said about the construction of the 'local'. It was also vital to developing interview questions and contextualising many of the answers provided in this second phase of my research (which began in April 2014).

Interviews

In the second phase I conducted individual semi-structured interviews in each of the three respective groups (individuals who had not had contact with Fambul Tok, individuals who had just begun working with Fambul Tok, and individuals who had worked with Fambul Tok for some time). In all instances I conducted the majority of the interviews in the biggest community in the section, and a few other interviews in neighbouring villages. Depending on time constraints, other research obligations and/or the obligations of my research assistants, I conducted about 20-25 personal interviews and attempted to obtain perspectives from community stakeholders (such as section and town chiefs, religious leaders and youth leaders) as well as 'ordinary' community members who were chosen on the basis of convenience for them, but with an eye on particular factors. In each village, I interviewed a diverse sample of people with regards to factors such as gender and age (see Appendix A for a full list of interviewees). Some villages had fairly concentrated ethnic or religious populations while others were more diverse. I tried to incorporate these factors as well but because the conflict did not have significant ethnic or religious dimensions, nor was my research aimed at a particular group, these factors were not as important to take into account.

To conduct these interviews I travelled to one community within the section, along with a research assistant[4], and stayed for a few days, regardless of the distance from Makeni. Local languages varied and so I used different research assistants based on the language

[4] All individuals were independent of the organisation

of a particular village. In all areas I worked, I first discussed my intentions with the town or section chief and provided a *bora* – a small amount of money that is a demonstration of respect for the village. I did *not* provide money or gifts to individual interviewees. Sierra Leone has, for the past fifteen years, been saturated by *oputus*[5] often coming to work on behalf of NGOs or as researchers (see for example Coulter 2009, 23-30). Villagers have become accustomed to believing there are incentives for interviews. Therefore, I tried to make clear that I would not provide any reward for individual interviewees, as I feared that it might fuel jealousy between village members, or motivate individuals to provide what they believed to be a 'correct answer.' However, as a gesture of good will and thanks, I did provide something that would have a wider communal benefit, such as supplies for the village school, after interviews had finished.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one and in a quiet setting with a diverse selection of village members. A research assistant was also frequently present to translate. By conducting interviews in this manner, the answers proved to be relatively diverse which provided for a rich set of data and one that suggests that individuals had different experiences and perspectives. Answers were documented in a notebook and later transcribed. Questions were predominantly aimed at understanding war-related experiences, its aftermath and, in the areas where relevant, perspectives about Fambul Tok activities (see Appendix C for sample questions). This allowed for both personal narratives as well as a broader picture of the village's wartime experience to emerge. Discussing conflict-related experiences can be a sensitive subject matter and so I allowed people to explain as much or as little as they desired. As Sierra Leone anthropologist Catherine Bolten notes, after the war "[e]veryone engaged in some form of 'social forgetting', where the act of *not* vocalizing something…is as important…as an act of articulation. This deliberate 'unspeaking' cannot unmake the past, but it can prevent a past that would torment the present" (2012, 24). Therefore, I never probed for further detail (beyond small points of clarification) than the account that was given. From an

[5] A local word to describe white Westerners

ethical perspective, I did not wish to risk inducing trauma on individuals by asking them to recount further details that may have made them uncomfortable. Furthermore, the main focus of this thesis is about post-conflict transitions and justice and so probing for further details did not seem particularly necessary.

It is also worth highlighting the fact that it has been over 10-15 years since conflict and post-conflict experiences had occurred and thus, some individuals did not always remember exact dates, times or smaller details. Most narratives highlighted personal experiences during these periods, how they were impacted and in what ways they employed their own agency to move past their war-related experiences. Lia Kent, who conducted research on local transitional justice in East Timor, also emphasises how such interviews should be understood as 'narratives' that tell different stories from official narratives and may be "fragmented, non-linear and highly personal" (2012, 11). Narratives often covered short anecdotal periods of time and often highlighted points critical to the individual. As Bolten notes, "People never remember exactly what happened, but will describe what is important for them to tell and for the listener to hear: a narrative that reinforces present life through the interpretation of past choices" (2012*a*, 24). However, their reasons for choosing specific moments and points to share were, in and of themselves, telling. Notably too, all individuals provided *some* account of their war or post-war experience with relative ease. Kieran Mitton also noted that interviews with Sierra Leonean ex-combatants and victims were "notable for [their] unflinching candour" (2015*a*, 26). The relaxed nature of these interviews may further indicate the extent to which people have in fact moved on from the conflict or, as noted above, may "prevent a past that would torment the present" (Bolten 2012*a*, 24).

In relation to the second group of interviewees – individuals who had just begun working with Fambul Tok – I was concerned that answers would be excessively positive in reference to the organisation due to the fact that village members had seen me arrive with staff. In general though, I did not find this to be the case. Individuals provided diverse opinions about the organisation. While I considered doing focus groups, I found that

carrying out individual interviews provided opportunities for more openness and frankness, free from pressures of village stakeholders or elders. Multiple individual interviews in particular villages provided a clearer picture of intersecting experiences and perspectives of both conflict-related and post-conflict related events. However, in a society where secrecy and suspicion are embedded in the social fabric (Ferme 2001; Shaw 2007), it was critical for me to maintain anonymity of informant responses (which is why they are simply listed by their initials in the Appendix), as well as to corroborate stories and cross-check information between village members. I often found that community teachers were useful informants for this purpose as they frequently spoke English and were able to provide corroboration and in-depth explanations on points that needed clarification. I would keep informant information confidential by simply inquiring about particular events or subject matter, rather than asking about particular individuals. In addition, these informants also often had a better grasp and appreciation for academic research and were often keen to be helpful during my stay.

In addition to community interviews, I conducted elite semi-structured interviews in Makeni with key actors who had facilitated other transitional justice and reconciliation programmes within the area prior to the establishment of Fambul Tok, such as the head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the Northern region and the head of the National Committee for Social Action (NaCSA). Although there is extensive literature on some of these other programmes, doing these interviews provided me further insight into the particulars of how local elites individually perceived and benefited from these recognised mechanisms and what this says more broadly about disaggregating the 'local' in processes of transitions and justice.

I ultimately conducted approximately 120 interviews during my first fieldwork trip (with an additional 52 during my follow-up trip). These interviews serve as the main thrust of the thesis by providing 'place-based' insights, opinions and context from diverse individual perspectives. Simultaneously, these interviews allowed for a 'bigger picture'

to emerge in relation to experiences during and after the war and opinions about Fambul Tok's programme.

Follow Up Research (2015-2016)

I made a follow up trip to Sierra Leone for one month, from December, 2015 to January, 2016. I was forced to hastily leave Sierra Leone in late June 2014 as the Ebola epidemic spread quickly throughout the country and more specifically, to my own research sites in Bombali district. The dominant media and academic narratives on Sierra Leone had drastically shifted as I was writing up in Edinburgh, as had the organisation's orientation. Therefore, upon return to Bombali I re-visited three of the five communities I had worked in and conducted follow-up interviews to understand how experiences during the Ebola outbreak compared to those during the civil conflict, as well as how Fambul Tok had first transformed into an 'Ebola' and later a 'Post-Ebola' organisation. I was able to spend time with Joseph, the Bombali district coordinator, and obtained some documentation about Fambul Tok's new programme. As a result, I was able to do further discourse analysis for chapter seven on the new programme, which provided other insights into relations between the director, district staff and participants as well as the temporal nature of transitions and justice. However, due to the fact that the programme is relatively new and only just being implemented, there is as yet little to ask/evaluate. In addition, they had not yet begun a programme in Bombali, and so I would have had to visit another district.[6]

Discourse Analysis

As part of understanding how the organisation presents itself to different audiences, I employed discourse analysis. While a wide range of disciplines employ discourse analysis, a commonality that underpins this analysis is that "language cannot be considered value free" (Cheeks 2004, 1144). Therefore, discourse analysis is "the study of language in use" (Gee 2014, 8). It does not take language at face value, but rather interrogates spoken or

[6] Please note the Bombali District Coordinator had been relocated to different district.

written language by examining the context and syntax of the author/speaker and the audience/participant. I analysed in what ways the organisation employed different discursive tropes on three different levels. Firstly, I analysed the organisation's own materials, such as their book and documentary film, which were largely aimed at and distributed to international audiences. Secondly, I looked at the spoken discourses from the initial stakeholder meetings held in Sierra Leonean villages. Finally, I analysed internal documents from my 2016 trip to understand how the organisation was maintaining certain tropes and values, but simultaneously changing its purpose. Analysing these components serves to reveal how power relations occur between different individuals, who produces these different discourses and how these relationships impact how the organisation is perceived.

I examined Fambul Tok's materials, looking for certain tropes prevalent in the wider local transitional justice discourses. Examples of these include the contexts in which the term 'local' is used, how words like 'ownership', 'tradition', and 'culture' were employed, how the bonfire ceremony was visually projected and in what ways Fambul Tok articulated its position in relation to other transitional justice mechanisms. The discourses employed in the text and DVD are more 'professional' narratives that evidently speak to particular broader discourses in academic literature and development practice. The book and DVD were predominantly the work of a group of Americans, in collaboration with Sierra Leonean director and local elite, John Caulker. Therefore, the fact that internationals and a local elite are the individuals constructing the local image of an organisation that prides itself on local ownership and participation serves to illustrate some of the broader implications of who speaks on behalf of whom, how that is portrayed to a wider audience and why. I also documented the discourses at stakeholder meetings, as discussed in the section on participant observation. I observed what language was being spoken, which individuals participated from the village and the language and idioms employed to frame Fambul Tok's programme. Understanding these discourses provides further insight into the interactions occurring between staff and village members, the diverse nature of the

'local' as well as an interesting contrast to the discourses projected to an international audience. See chapter four for an in-depth analysis of these texts.

Finally, I analysed internal Fambul Tok documents about the organisation's new programme, which I received on my second visit to Sierra Leone. Analysing the tropes in these documents, such as how local ownership was employed and the role of participation, demonstrated how, while Fambul Tok's programme was in desperate need of reinvention, the discourse itself is transferrable. Notably too, these documents were not written for an international audience but rather were compiled notes from various meetings with villages that were written up by district staff members and presented to the executive director. This document provides a key example of how district staff are translating notes about local priorities into the international global discourse, reflecting a particular social conditioning of staff by the organisation. It further emphasises how the 'local' is in fact very diverse and certain individuals do not have the same access to resources as others. This will be further explored in chapter seven.

Ethics and Self-Awareness

The research was approved through the University of Edinburgh research ethics procedures. A 'Level 2' application (see Appendix D) was submitted due to the sensitive nature of some of the interview questions. Prior to interviews I did explain my own position as an independent academic researcher and that all answers or opinions would not be shared with other Sierra Leoneans, particularly other village members or anyone related to Fambul Tok. I also explained what sorts of questions I would be asking and obtained verbal consent prior to starting the interview. As I highlighted above, I did not 'push' for detailed information in reference to the conflict, yet to my surprise people spoke about it fairly calmly. Regardless of the information provided, I always remained composed and attempted to be compassionate when the information was sensitive. If it appeared that an interviewee was uncomfortable I moved on to another question and in one instance where a person did get visibly upset, I stopped the interview immediately.

Before leaving the village that day I ensured she was okay and had been cared for. In addition, when I was with the organisation conducting participant observation at meetings, they always introduced me as a researcher from a UK university to ensure attendees knew I was not part of the organisation.

While it is the foremost responsibility of the researcher to 'do no harm' to informants, there is also a duty of care to oneself. Being an American woman has certain implications. For example, villagers sometimes expected monetary compensation for an interview or were suspicious of my motivations for obtaining information. However, I did not find these to be significant constraints in my overall research, as discussed above. In addition, I was acutely aware of the fact that every act leaves an impression and so it was necessary for me to be consistently self-reflective, particularly in rural areas. While the kindness and generosity of village members cannot be overstated, these visits were sometimes a struggle. I encountered minor health problems due to food and water, extreme heat, difficult living conditions and, at times, psychological strain as a result of the interview material and the general impoverished circumstances. Thus, these visits could be emotionally and physically taxing and so I often only spent anywhere between three to ten days in rural areas before returning to Makeni. I did take breaks and spent time away from Fambul Tok staff and villages. These steps were critical for maintaining good physical and mental health during fieldwork.

Organising and Interpreting the Data

To organise the data I developed my own coding system based on themes throughout the field notes and interview questions. These themes each have a heading. Each of these headings pertains to different sections of the thesis, namely *conflict experiences*, *engagement with recognised transitional justice programmes* (such as the SCSL and TRC) and *perceptions about various components of the Fambul Tok programme*. I then categorised each community under each interview question and then listed each respondent's answer with their initials. I have a list of each village with each respondent's

initials in a separate document (as shown in Appendix A). Elite interviews were transcribed and kept in separate documents from village interviews. In all documents I highlighted relevant points for the thesis, such as religious references, opinions about Fambul Tok and the bonfire ceremonies and references to specific methods through which people were able to move past their war-related experiences. Organising the data under themed headings made the search for specific points or details more efficient.

My place-based approach meant that Sierra Leonean perspectives and interpretations were the impetus for developing the structure of my thesis. As I went through the observations and interviews, certain threads became evident. The first thing that became evident in examining this data was the underlying assumption that transitional justice has to be facilitated through an institution. Rather, individuals had engaged in a variety of other processes *prior* to the Fambul Tok intervention and so I began to adjust my questions to investigate other processes that had also occurred outside of the official transitional justice scope and discourse. This ultimately led to an examination of 'unrecognised processes' in chapter six. Another finding that emerged was the relationship between religious epistemologies and Fambul Tok's messages. These components, along with many others, have led me to situate this thesis within a broad range of disciplines and literatures. Using the analytic place-based approach has enabled me to provide a more holistic picture of individuals and their activities that make up local transitional justice. I argue that individuals produce their own transitional justice programmes and processes through both recognised and unrecognised mechanisms.

Each chapter is organised around the role and agency of different individuals involved in transitional justice programmes and processes. My analysis of individual actors draws attention away from official programme goals and descriptions and focuses on the role of individual agency in shaping transitional justice processes to illustrate how they diverge from the official organisational narratives. It will also emphasise the diverse ways in which individuals engaged with recognised mechanisms and the different, unrecognised modes through which individuals gradually moved past their war-related experiences.

The following chapter provides background and context in relation to the conflict and post-conflict eras, more specifically focusing on individual wartime experiences as well as perspectives on recognised transitional justice institutions and programmes. Chapters four and five will examine the individuals involved in constructing and maintaining Fambul Tok, as well as how villagers co-opted this programme to better suit their own needs. Chapter six will explore the unrecognised mechanisms, or latent processes that individuals engaged with in the post-conflict era. Chapter seven will revisit Fambul Tok in the current period to understand how the organisation has, itself, transitioned away from post-conflict to post-Ebola, and what the broader implications are for local transitional justice organisations.

Chapter 3: Background of the Civil War and Post-Conflict Era (1991-2007)

Introduction

This chapter provides background with regards to both the civil conflict in Sierra Leone and the primary transitional justice mechanisms instituted after it. The first half seeks to illustrate how the conflict happened differently in different areas, with a particular focus on Bombali district. This part will also focus on some individual war-related experiences to demonstrate how individuals creatively managed their circumstances during the conflict. The second half will provide an overview and critical analysis of recognised transitional justice processes and programmes. I will analyse how each of these programmes understood themselves to be local and to be facilitating 'ownership'. This discussion will also situate the later analysis of Fambul Tok and the 'gap' they were seeking to fill.

The conflict began in March 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) vanguard invaded Bomaru, Sierra Leone from Liberia. This small group of fighters was predominantly made up of Sierra Leonean revolutionaries and members of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) with support from Liberian militant, Charles Taylor. The invasion marked the beginning of a decade long civil conflict (1991-2002) that infiltrated virtually every part of the country. Complicated relationships and tenuous alliances resulted in different rebel factions and changes in leadership over the course of the conflict. Violence and intimidation against civilians was commonplace throughout the war, as were challenging social and economic circumstances. The vast majority of Sierra Leoneans were thus impacted in some way. However, individuals were not simply victims, as much of the transitional literature would suggest; they engaged in a variety of creative strategies, such as building makeshift homes in the bush and appointing certain individuals to liaise with rebel forces, in order to manage their war-related experiences and circumstances.

Towards the end of the conflict, various recognised transitional justice mechanisms were implemented. In particular, though, a new transitional justice 'experiment' was conducted. The Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission operated simultaneously (Schabas 2003). While both mechanisms are considered to have had both successes and pitfalls, it is clear that for both, incorporating

"local components" was a secondary consideration. Fundamental assumptions about these mechanisms were not questioned, nor was context necessarily considered (Kelsall 2010). In addition, research on these mechanisms has largely focused on effectiveness in relation to their own goals, and has not as readily examined the alternative ways in which individuals have interpreted and, in some cases, engaged with these mechanisms.

In this chapter, I will first examine the historical antecedents to the conflict in rural areas to better understand the role of chieftaincy in facilitating conflict-related grievances. I then provide a broad overview of critical events during the conflict to provide context for the following discussions on Bombali district and individual war-related experiences. In the second half, I will look at the recognised transitional justice mechanisms, namely Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), the Special Court of Sierra Leone, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Reparations programme with particular focus on how these mechanisms understood themselves to be localising their respective mechanisms and how these mechanisms were interpreted more broadly by individual Sierra Leoneans. Using a combination of both primary and secondary sources, this chapter provides an important framework for analysing Fambul Tok's discourses and interactions in rural villages.

The War in Sierra Leone (1991-2002)

Historical Antecedents and Causes of the Conflict

To understand how the conflict ultimately unfolded and the motivations for violent mobilisation, it is first necessary to provide some historical background. This section examines how rural chieftaincy structures contributed to widespread disillusionment in areas where I worked prior to the war. The chieftaincy system is important to highlight because it played a substantial role in perpetuating the conflict and presently continues to

dominate rural governance (Jackson 2007). In fact, Fambul Tok staff navigated these social structures in order to implement their programmes. This section will also examine the academic debates in reference to the underlying causes of conflict, arguing that the experiences and motivations of ex-combatants also cannot be easily categorised. These should also be understood as individual.

Scholars (such as Abdullah 2004; Fanthorpe 2001; Richards 1996; Sawyer 2008) generally agree that historical antecedents, like colonial institutions and post-colonial neo-patrimonial regimes, played a prominent role in creating the circumstances that ultimately led to the conflict. The Sierra Leone hinterland[7] became a British Protectorate in 1896. The protectorate was divided into various districts, that were in turn divided into chieftaincies, which were governed by indirect rule through paramount chiefs and sub-chiefs (now section chiefs), with oversight from British District Commissioners. Chiefs at all levels were responsible for tax collection and helped to organise labour for public works, and were allowed to exact their own tributes and labour services as a customary chieftaincy right. It was a criminal offence to disobey a lawful order from a chief (Fanthorpe 2001, 380). These types of laws set a precedent for future chiefs who would ultimately use them to marginalise many rural young men in the post-independence era.

Sierra Leone became independent in 1961 and in the post-independence era, the chiefdom system largely maintained colonial practices such as labour services and tax collection. These practices worsened due to political factors in the 1970s and '80s. Siaka Stevens, who was President of Sierra Leone from 1971-85, turned what had been a bureaucratic state into a patrimonial regime, concentrating wealth and resources to a small elite group of government officials (Reno 1995). Stevens also provided chiefs with further powers in rural areas. In 1972, he implemented a provision that gave paramount chiefs the authority to distinguish 'natives' – people with hereditary rights to land – from 'non-natives,' who were expected to pay for leases to build homes and conduct business (Fanthorpe 2001,

[7] Hinterland refers to all areas outside of Freetown and the Freetown peninsula.

381). Therefore, individuals who did not own land were required to pay landowners for its use. In addition, marriage required a 'dowry' and often a bride service, wherein men were forced to work as labourers. Traditional courts were also controlled by the ruling elite and thus, "regular fining of young cultivators [kept] them in poverty and dependency" (Richards 2005, 585). The chieftaincy was further strengthened when Stevens disbanded local district councils in the same year. This meant that chiefs occupied the sole governing structure in rural areas and held absolute power, ultimately leading to a disillusioned group of men who were unable to access land or brides (Fanthorpe 2001, 381). In 1985, Joseph Momoh was selected as Stevens' successor; at this point, however, the one-party state was bankrupt and a large contingent of rural Sierra Leoneans was completely disillusioned (Ibid).

Academic literature on the conflict is frequently dichotomised into a 'rural/urban debate' (Harris 2013, 87). Most prominently, Paul Richards argues that the main rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) core were influenced by Gaddafian *Green Book* ideology.[8] They were understood to be fighting against oppressive government (and by extension, chieftaincy) structures and were attempting to reinstitute 'people's power' (Richards 1996, 25). Many of the initial RUF recruits were youths mainly from the rural Southeast (near the Liberian border) (Richards 2005, 576). Richards argues that many of these men were motivated to join because they had been subjected to unfair treatment such as labour exploitation, chiefly levies and arbitrary fines by chiefs, and thus, Richards likens the conflict to a modern-day slave revolt (2005, 580).

By contrast, Ibrahim Abdullah argues that the RUF core were wanton 'lumpen' – unemployed, urban youth largely working seedy jobs and prone to criminal behaviour – who were not inspired by revolutionary ideologies, nor had any real political or developmental ambitions, as evidenced by "their failure to win the sympathy of the very

[8] Some key RUF revolutionaries, including RUF leader Foday Sankoh, were trained in Libya in the 1980s.

people they claim to be fighting for" (2004, 63). Rather, these men were opportunists from urban areas who saw potential economic and social benefit through violent conflict.

Both theses have some merit. Many youth could easily have had more than one reason that drove them to engage in fighting. As David Harris concisely notes, reasons for joining, or not leaving, were likely diverse: "These might hinge on their experience of marginalisation and brutalisation in urban slums or the diamond areas, at the hands of some gerontocratic chiefs, or with a peculiarly distanced, venal and patronising elite" (2013, 100). Therefore, experiences and motivations of combatants were likely individually specific. Neo-patrimonial and authoritarian practices had embedded a sense of mistrust and uncertainty and resulted in a significant group of individuals feeling disillusioned. Taking up arms provided "an outlet for frustrations, a way out of an unsatisfactory position in society and the means to redress one's situation" (Ibid). These frustrations became evident in attacks during the war. As the Truth Commission report notes: "Certain groups like property owners, chiefs, figures of traditional authority and representatives of government institutions were targeted on the basis of revenge, [and] economic appropriation" (TRC Report 2004, Vol. 2, 11). Many individuals sought to exact revenge on those individuals, such as chiefs and ruling elites, who were symbolic of the traditional system. They were not the only targets though. The next section provides a broad overview of the conflict timeline and highlights some of the extreme violence that occurred.

The Sierra Leone Civil War: A Brief Overview

This overview will provide a timeline of the main events during the conflict, which took place in three phases: Phase I (1991-1993), Phase II (1993-1997) and Phase III (1997-2000). These events provide broader context within which more regional and individual experiences can better be understood. It also demonstrates the chaotic nature of this period and the extent to which individuals in rural areas were impacted. In 1991, when the conflict first began, many Sierra Leoneans were supportive and actively sought to join the

Revolutionary United Front in an attempt to change their socioeconomic circumstances (Richards 2005, 585). Although a large percentage of individuals surveyed after the conflict claim to have been abducted,[9] Richards maintains that they were equally aware of the movement's political objectives (2005, 576).

In 1992, Joseph Momoh was overthrown in a relatively peaceful military coup led by Valentine Strasser, which replaced him with the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The RUF expressed support for the coup. It was also welcomed by many Sierra Leoneans. Strasser, however, did not support the RUF movement and as a result he expanded the military and attempted to defeat them. Strasser did not demonstrate effective leadership, nor was he particularly diligent in looking after his military and as a result the phenomenon of *sobels* – soldiers by day, rebels by night – came about (Keen 2005; Gberie 2005). It was during this period in the mid-1990s, Phase II of the war (1993-1997), that the RUF "were responsible for more violations and abuses than before or after" (TRC Report 2004, Vol.2, 42). They fought a guerrilla campaign characterised by ambushes and 'hit and run attacks,' kidnapping young men and women, committing grotesque acts of violence against civilians and looting goods throughout the country to sustain themselves (Ibid).

By 1995, the RUF was only 20 miles from Freetown when the government hired a South African mercenary group, Executive Outcomes, to fend them off and regain control of critical mineral areas (Keen 2005, 151). They worked alongside the Kamajors (later part of the Civil Defence Force (CDF)), a civil militia originally founded in the southeast, in an attempt to defend their respective areas from the rebels. In January 1996, a high-ranking NPRC officer, Julius Maada Bio, led a successful military operation to overthrow Strasser. In March, Sierra Leone held national elections wherein the Sierra Leone People's Party candidate, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, was elected. In November 1996, the Sierra Leone government and RUF leaders signed the Abidjan Peace Agreement. The agreement gave

[9] According to the Humphries and Weinstein survey, 87% claim to have been abducted (2004, 25).

amnesty to RUF soldiers and allowed for the group to become a political party and for its members to be integrated into the Sierra Leone armed forces. However, members of the RUF would not be integrated into national government posts. The agreement also stipulated that, due to gross violations by Executive Outcomes, the group was to be removed from Sierra Leone (Keen 2005).

There was, however, little evidence in Sierra Leone that the conflict was coming to an end. Kabbah was continuing to support CDF troops and in March 1997, RUF leader Foday Sankoh was placed under house arrest in Nigeria and Sam 'Mosquito' Bockarie took over the RUF ground forces (Keen 2005, 194). On the 25th of May 1997, a group of disillusioned Sierra Leone Army soldiers *(sobels)* went to the notorious Pedemba Road prison and freed some 600 prisoners and armed them. Most notably, Johnny Paul Koroma, a well-trained military officer who had been imprisoned for plotting to overthrow the government months before, was freed, and would ultimately lead what came to be known as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which partnered with the RUF to overthrow the government (Gberie 2005). The AFRC and RUF then formed a junta government, while Kabbah was exiled to Guinea. What followed was mass looting and violence all over Sierra Leone. According to the TRC report, "AFRC soldiers viewed civilians with contempt because they regarded civilian life as the hallmark of what their enemies stood for…[T]hese perceptions were the cause of unprecedented levels of all categories of violations…They harboured a vengeful and callous disregard for human life and limb" (2004, Vol. 2, 61). The AFRC had little regard for civilians and conducted a callous and oppressive campaign during their time in power, and well after. The Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), however, maintained a substantial presence after the AFRC invasion and was ultimately able to drive out these forces in February 1998. Kabbah returned to Freetown the following month (Keen 2005).

After the AFRC's expulsion from Freetown, many of its soldiers escaped upcountry and maintained a substantial presence in the North, particularly Bombali (see more detail

below). On the 23rd of December 1998, the rebel forces took over Bombali's capital city, Makeni, which served as a primary AFRC/RUF base until the end of the war (Bolten 2012*a*). On the 6th of January 1999 the rebels returned to Freetown and killed an estimated 7,000 people in what became known as 'Operation No Living Thing.' In July of that same year, Kabbah was forced to make serious concessions to the AFRC/RUF in the Lome Peace Accord. He pardoned Sankoh and made him vice president with oversight of the mines (diamond mining is a particularly lucrative industry in Sierra Leone). In return, the rebels were supposed to disarm and demobilise. The agreement was to be enforced by ECOMOG and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) (Gberie 2005; Keen 2005).

This agreement also quickly unravelled and in May 2000, 500 UN peacekeepers were taken hostage and the rebels were again on their way to Freetown. Sankoh was at this point arrested and kept in Pendemba Road prison where he would ultimately be poisoned prior to standing trial at the Special Court. It was also during this period that the British military intervened and quickly pushed the rebels back from Freetown. In November a ceasefire was signed and by the end of the year, Issa Sesay, the RUF interim leader, was returning weapons to UNAMSIL and allowing entry into RUF areas (Gberie 2005; Keen 2005. The war was officially declared over by President Kabbah in January 2002, when a DDR programme had been completed (Kabbah Speech 2002).

The conflict resulted in over 50,000 killed and thousands more injured (Human Rights Watch 1999). Mass violence ensued in all phases of the conflict. Actors on all sides performed "horrifying acts of cruelty as routine" (Mitton 2015*a*, 2), such as conscripting child soldiers, burning homes (often with people inside), torture, amputations and sexually assaulting and enslaving women (Ibid, 4). Furthermore, attacks were often perpetrated by people with whom the victims were previously acquainted or familiar. This entrenched a sense of distrust between individuals and undermined the foundations of co-existence in villages (TRC Report 2004, Vol. 3A, 515). In other instances, individuals did not have such extreme experiences of violence, but were socially and economically impacted.

Therefore, Sierra Leoneans experienced the conflict in different ways and at different times. This overview, however, seeks to provide the broad framework necessary for understanding Bombali district's role in the conflict and, more specifically, the experiences of individual informants.

Bombali District and its Role in the Conflict

Bombali is a large district extending from the middle of Sierra Leone all the way to the Guinean border (see maps on page 49 of the previous chapter). It is made up of thirteen chiefdoms and is home to a fairly heterogeneous population: Temne and Limba being the dominant ethnic groups in the region, but there are also sizable numbers of Madingo, Loko, Kuranko and Fula. This heterogeneity was further enhanced during the conflict with an influx of Southern and Eastern refugees as well as the fact that the RUF was based in Makeni (the district capital) towards the end of the war (Bolten 2012*a*). Thus, many ex-combatants were based in this area after the conflict ended.

Bombali's wartime experience substantially differed from other parts of the country. According to the No Peace Without Justice Project report entitled *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, Bombali District was not directly affected by the war until 1994, when the RUF attacked a chiefdom bordering Port Loko district (to the west). They were also attacking communities on the Batkanu-Gbendembu road prior to the 1996 elections (Smith *et al.* 2004, 126). During interviews, informants in Makulon stated that the rebels became present here towards the end of 1996, in large part due to the diamond mines in this area. In short, the RUF had a relatively minor presence in this area prior to the AFRC/RUF expulsion from Freetown. Therefore, large parts of these rural areas did not personally encounter rebel factions until much later in the conflict and as a result, did not have the same sustained interactions with conflict and violence as other regions did.

It was not until after the AFRC/RUF junta was overthrown in March 1998 that rebel presence became much more notable and widespread throughout Bombali. As the Truth Commission report notes:

> The five Districts of the Northern Province, as well as Kono District in the North-East, became hosts to the overwhelming majority of the ousted AFRC dissidents. Thousands of junta soldiers, as well as a considerable proportion of the fighting forces of the RUF, flooded into the North on their mass retreat from power (TRC Report 2004, Vol. 3A, 291).

It is further noted in the TRC Report that ECOMOG purposely left a corridor open so that the rebels could secure passage via the Freetown peninsula. ECOMOG forces were seeking to avert a bloody clash between pro-Government forces in and around Freetown and spare civilian casualties within Freetown (Ibid, 292). In so doing, however, northern districts, particularly Bombali, became subject to RUF/AFRC attacks.

In the towns where I conducted research – the area along Kabala highway (Karina and Bumban sections) – attacks occurred in early May 1998[10] while areas further north, such as Makomray and towns near Kamalo (such as Mayelie and Gbintimaria) were attacked in late summer/early fall 1998. This period, commonly referred to as Phase III of the war, was substantially different from previous Phases. This period was highly destructive and disorganised 'due to the poorly managed union between the RUF and AFRC forces and decapitation of the group's centralised command' (Marks 2013, 188). The *sobels*-turn-AFRC, along with many opportunistic fighters, were not accustomed to living in rural settings and had not been subject to the strict rules and punishment that many from the RUF had been prior to the 1997 Freetown invasion (Ibid).

Upon expulsion from Freetown, the RUF/AFRC forces launched a campaign in February called 'Operation Pay Yourself', in which:

> …forces took anything that could be of use, from livestock and other food items, to domestic items such as mattresses and cooking pots, and motor vehicles, trucks, and motorcycles. Although looting had been standard practice throughout the previous RUF campaigns and 'food finding missions' had been commonplace since 1992, the scale and intensity of "Operation Pay Yourself" was unprecedented in Sierra Leone (Smith *et al.* 2004, 34).

[10] Please note there is a discrepancy between my research data and that in *Conflict Mapping*. Karina residents claimed their big attack (described similarly by residents and in the document) occurred on 5th May 1998, after the junta was overthrown, whereas the document claims it was 27th May 1997, whilst the junta was still in power. All my interviewees, whom I spoke to individually at different times, provided the 5th May 1998 date and so I do believe this is correct.

This campaign ultimately came to characterise the third and final phase of the war and is reflected in many of the accounts from Bombali individuals. 'Food finding' (or "*Jaja"*) missions were particularly commonplace and frequently mentioned in interviews (see accounts in next section). Liaising structures, known as the G5, were implemented throughout Bombali villages. These were individuals selected by the RUF/AFRC commanders who became civil-military intermediaries, who relayed combatant food and human resource demands to their own villages (Smith *et al.* 2004, 37). These interactions were not understood as a 'betrayal' by village members (see below), but rather a practical necessity that minimised the risk of violent encounters with rebels. AFRC/RUF dissidents would capture, or more commonly, instruct village members to produce items such as crops and livestock. Individuals were often forced to carry loads, but were not as frequently 'kidnapped' and forced to remain with the rebels, as had been the case earlier in the conflict. This meant that everyday interactions with rebels, while certainly difficult, did not *always* constitute the violence commonly depicted in descriptions of the conflict, as discussed above.

The conflict in rural Bombali villages was an operation of looting and destruction for various rebel strands to sustain themselves, rather than an attempt at securing land or converting political ideologies, as had been the case much earlier in the conflict. In addition, while this period did have some forced conscription, particularly in relation to carrying looted supplies and *jaja* missions, it was not to the same extent as other phases in other parts of the country. According to the Humphries and Weinstein report, which surveyed over 1000 ex-combatants, 68% originated from the East and South where the conflict had begun, while only 24% came from the North (2004, 15).[11] Therefore, the conflict in Bombali is better understood as an invasion of outside, already established forces. How individuals experienced the conflict was, however, diverse and managed in different, often creative ways.

[11] The other 8% came from the Freetown peninsula.

Individual War-related Experiences in Rural Bombali Villages

This section looks at individual war-related experiences to provide a more intimate examination of how the conflict transpired in the areas I worked in, and in what ways individuals managed their circumstances during this period. As discussed above, attacks in Bombali villages commonly occurred because the rebels were looking for sustenance, but they were also violent towards individuals. Prior to an attack, rebels would sometimes send people to scope out the towns. In Karina, for example, "[B]efore the attack, men started coming just to study the village" (interview with LF, Karina 2014). When armed factions arrived in villages, people "went helter skelter"[12] running in all different directions in attempts to avoid being captured or killed. Rebels often stole food and livestock, burnt houses and intimidated or harmed individuals, often only spending a short period of time in one village before quickly moving on. The story of Karina was a particularly violent offence:

> The rebels came on 5th May 1998. People were praying in the mosque; there were six people killed at the mosque. I was listening to the radio, I came out and people had been captured, a rebel told me to stop. They attacked and left. They burnt several houses, the school was burnt and 10 people were captured…I slept in the bush for 3 months… [and] I stayed in Kamabai for a month. ECOMOG pulled out at the end of 1998 and after the rebels came but they were not killing, just food finding (interview with DB, Karina 2014).

During these initial attacks, the rebels seemed to leave as quickly as they appeared. For individuals these invasions symbolised the point at which they became enveloped in the war and the war became a part of their everyday lives. Prior to invasions, many Sierra Leoneans had heard about the conflict on the radio or from relatives in regions where rebels were present.[13] Where people had travelled they occasionally encountered difficulties with rebels, but Sierra Leoneans who had predominantly remained in their general vicinity did not become engulfed in the conflict until after the AFRC was forced out of Freetown and established a Bombali presence. This resulted in physical displacement, which in turn shifted individual priorities and represented a descent into an

[12] A term a research assistant often emphatically employed to describe the chaos that erupted when rebels arrived.
[13] It is worth bearing in mind that this period was prior to the wide availability of mobile phones.

extraordinary period wherein the sense of normality was disrupted and replaced with an enhanced sense of uncertainty and fear.

In rural Sierra Leone, daily activities, such as farming, cooking and eating, are communal and ultimately dictate their social and economic lives. Their colleagues are their friends; family members are their bosses and business partners. There are few boundaries between 'personal' and 'professional' life; social and economic livelihoods are one and the same. The conflict, however, fragmented these daily routines. People no longer went to their farms or sold goods in the markets; they often did not eat meals or drink *poyo* (palm wine) in the evenings; social groups, such as secret societies and religious gatherings, became fractured and did not meet as frequently. Thus, the inter-connected nature of daily life and the sociality that accompanied these activities became stagnant during certain periods of the conflict.

After attacks occurred in these areas, people scattered: "Some people went to Guinea, some to the bush, some to Makeni" (interview with KK*a* Karina 2014). As demonstrated above, people moved around to different towns in reaction to rebel movement in attempts to feel safer. In one instance, a woman recalled how when she fled Makomray, "I stayed [in Makeni] for two months and then rebels entered so I came back and went to the bush for seven months" (interview with MK*a*, Makomray 2014). Another interviewee explained that, "The war met me in Kono. I came back here [Maron[14]] as a result of Kono…when the rebels came here, we ran to the bush for two months" (interview with LD, Maron 2014). Thus, while movement itself was not wholly restricted, "there was no freedom of movement during the war because of fear" (interview with AK*f*, Makomray 2014). Individuals became more aware of their movements and, much like a game of chess, calculated each move in an effort to avoid encountering rebels.

[14] A small village near Mayelie

Even people who ran to the bush would commonly come into their villages at certain times of day and go back to sleep in order to avoid meeting rebels. A man from Bumban section described how, "We would send a few people to look for guys, and then we would come [to the village], get a few things and go back to the bush" (interview with OM, Kadama 2014). In another instance, a man recounted how the smoke rising from a pot would signal the rebels, so they often ate uncooked food (interview with BC, Bumban 2014). People were constantly re-evaluating their circumstances and strategically mobilising in attempts to avoid the rebels, harnessing their own agency to enact creative means for survival. As a result, villages were fragmented and the activities and interaction that defined normal times transformed.

Wartime experiences influence how individual priorities shift to engage with more direct and immediate modes of survival. During the conflict "people were just trying to survive, but had no supplies" (interview with KK*a*, Karina 2014). Wartime circumstances resulted in no assurance or certainty about their future: "When the rebels lived with us life was not easy. We were always living in fear" (interview with MK, Bumban 2014). Another man said that "during the war we were always getting bad messages and it made us afraid" (interview with LK, Makomray 2014). This sense of fear and uncertainty are marked characteristics of conflict periods and come to dictate the everyday lives of individuals. As Carolyn Nordstrom notes, during periods of conflict "people's lives simply do not progress in a known way" (1997, 14). Therefore, individuals are constantly re-navigating their uncertain terrain in order to ensure that basic needs were being met.

Circumstances surrounding displacement and relocation also bear unfortunate consequences. A woman from Benia recalls having to give birth in the bush but due to the difficult circumstances "[the baby] died after nine months; he/she was sick from being in the Bush. [The baby] got pneumonia" (interview with AK*a*, Mayelie 2014). Illness and malnutrition are by-products of war that result in significant casualties, but are often unaccounted for in the official death toll. As Lacina and Gleditsch (2005) point out, the number of battle deaths does not provide an accurate depiction of a conflict's casualties.

In Sierra Leone, the death toll is often estimated between 25-70,000. When accounting for indirect deaths (i.e. related to the "by-products of war" referred to above) the estimated death toll is around 460,000, meaning that only about 5-15% of estimated deaths resulted from direct physical violence. This illustrates how it was not violence, so often associated with conflict death tolls, which caused the most casualties. Rather, it was the indirect consequences, such as the struggle to access basic goods and services, which resulted in the majority of deaths. Therefore, daily survival not only dictated how individuals strategically moved around to avoid the rebels; it also proved to be crippling because of the inability to access essentials, such as medicine.

Simultaneously, while individuals were frequently re-evaluating and reacting to their circumstances, they were not simply passive victims. Much like Nordstrom's findings from Mozambique, the Sierra Leonean conflict did not, in all areas and at all times, result in the Hobbesian state-of-nature mentalities one might assume. Rather, individuals worked together and harnessed creative means of survival (1997). In Karina, for example, a few hours after the attack had occurred, a group of men came back into the village and began hitting oil drums and yelling in an effort to repel the rebels. He likened it to the story of David and Goliath. They continued doing this for about a week (interview with BF, Karina 2014). Another Karina resident (who was also an ex-combatant) explained that, in reality, this likely did not scare the rebels, as they were often on a schedule (interview with MS*a* Karina 2014). However, it was an *active* reaction to the attack, not simply a passive solution. Individuals also managed their circumstances in other ways. Some people remained in the bush and built grass houses. Many individuals said they ate raw cassava plants for long periods of time to avoid making smoke that could be seen by the rebels. Thus, Sierra Leoneans were very tactical in their movement and actions.

Furthermore, some interviewees were part of the G5 forces and sought to negotiate with the rebels on behalf of their villages. As one member described: "My job was to get food and manpower for carrying loads" (interview with AK*e*, Makomray 2014). The rebels

taxed villagers and G5 members were forced to negotiate these terms. As one man recalled:

> We generally had a good relationship with them; we would give rice and palm oil. At one point Mohamed Savage[15] (commander in the area) demanded a tax of 1 gallon palm oil, Le 1,000, and 2 pan rice paid as a tax for owning oxen. People were unhappy to pay tax so I went to negotiate and was beaten by Savage, 300 lashes (interview with MS*b*, Karina 2014).

By cooperating and negotiating with rebels through this system, village members were able to look out for themselves. Interactions between G5 members and the rebels demonstrate the complex nature of relationships in conflict-related circumstances. A G5 man was, however, not considered a traitor because, as illustrated above, it was at times risky and violent[16]; but it was better for one person to be harmed than an entire village. As Catherine Bolten notes: "It was acceptable to court rebel interaction as part of a survival strategy…as long as one did not participate in acts of violence" (2012, 500). This activity was understood by villagers to be necessary for survival: "It was protection for me, my family and the community. It prevented violence" (interview with MF, Karina 2014). These uncertain circumstances were a stark contrast to what was considered a normal everyday life. However, these examples demonstrate how individuals were not simple victims; rather, they were active agents in their own, creative modes of survival.

Fear during wartime is not just about direct physical violence but also refers to the inability to know the future or to feel any sense of control over one's own livelihood (Finnstrom 2008). Fear comes to dictate every movement. This does not necessarily mean that individuals were threatened by violence every day. Rather, it is the knowledge that it *could* occur, that the rebels were capable of inflicting pain and even death, which ultimately shaped everyday life during the civil war. These threats became an embedded part of managing survival, influencing how people acted, interacted and negotiated their livelihoods in the face of difficult, often life-threatening circumstances.

[15] RUF/AFRC Commander in Kamabai and, interestingly, someone who will be an integral player in the Fambul Tok discussion.

[16] Some interviewees now hold respected positions in their villages. I met a few G5 members who now hold the positions of Youth Leader and even interim section chief.

The conflict 'ended' at different points in different parts of the country. Interviewees stated that rebels slowly left their respective areas over time. There was not, however, one particular point at which they would have said the conflict had officially ended. Rather, villagers began to rebuild and reconcile their war-related experiences through unrecognised mechanisms (see chapter 6), thereby demonstrating the continuity of creatively mobilising their own agency in both the conflict and 'post-conflict' eras.

'Post-Conflict' era and Transitional Justice Programs in Sierra Leone

Prior to examining Fambul Tok's discourses and practices, as well as other mechanisms that helped people move past their war-related experiences, it is necessary to examine the recognised transitional justice programmes and institutions that were part of the 'transitional justice toolkit', to understand how individuals engaged with these programmes as well as understand how Fambul Tok rationalised the need for further reconciliation. In July 1999, the Sierra Leonean government and the RUF signed the Lome Peace Accord that provided a controversial amnesty to all participants in the war and pledged to set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, after fighting renewed in May 2000, the amnesty provision was reconsidered and the government requested the assistance of the United Nations in establishing a tribunal. Sierra Leone thus became "a laboratory in which to examine how the two bodies, special 'internationalized' courts and truth commissions, relate to each other" (Schabas 2003, 1065).

Transitional justice mechanisms in Sierra Leone were designed in the early 2000s when incorporating local elements was also becoming more central to the transitional justice discourse. Architects of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) and the Truth Commission of Sierra Leone attempted to incorporate specific components designated as local, to more effectively legitimise these bodies. However, the ways that 'local' was conceived and incorporated perhaps says more about how the people designing and

implementing these mechanisms understood this concept, than an actual reflection of Sierra Leonean values and priorities. This section will look at the various programmes and institutions (DDR, SCSL, TRC and reparations) implemented in Sierra Leone to understand the context in which John Caulker framed the need for a more local approach to transitional justice and reconciliation. I will focus in particular on how these organisations understood local ownership of the transitional justice process, as well as instances of individual appropriation of these recognised processes and programmes.

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (DDR) was initially established in the 1996 Abidjan Peace Accord. However, with the exception of just after the March 1998 coup where 3,000 combatants turned in their weapons, few combatants took the opportunity to demobilise at this time. In 1999, the Lome peace accord stipulated a new commitment to the programme, but the process was still very slow and it was not until the Abuja accords in 2000 that ex-combatants finally began to disarm. From May 2001 to January 2002, approximately 42,500 fighters disarmed (Peters 2011, 179).

The programme had more than seventy thousand participants and cost about $30 million (NCDDR 2004). Ex-combatant participants would receive some money for turning in their weapon. They also had the opportunity to enlist in the Sierra Leone army, return to school and continue education, receive skills training, agricultural training or participate in public works (such as food for work). By providing these trainings, the organisation had envisioned making ex-combatants more employable, thereby addressing some of the issues relating to youth disenfranchisement that had initially led to the conflict. Ultimately, eighty-six per cent chose education or a type of training in either a certain skillset (such as carpentry) or agriculture. It is notable though that many who had enrolled did not end up participating in these training programmes (about 25% of the total participants according to the Humphries and Weinstein 2004 survey).

While the programme was successful in collecting a sizable amount of weapons, it was also readily criticised. Firstly, this particular DDR programme did not include women and certain weapons, such as knives or shotguns were not 'accepted' as weapons and as a result excluded an estimated 80% of CDF members (Coulter 2009; Richards *et al.* 2004). In addition, the trainings offered to ex-combatants would often only occur every once in a while, and so individuals would often have to wait significant periods of time to participate. Many DDR offices were based in regional centres and so for individuals living in rural areas, this required travel, even just to see if their name was on the list for the next scheduled skills training. As a result, many ex-combatants gave up after some time. Even those who did receive skills training often did not find work in these professions afterward.

Rather, many ex-combatants found alternative modes to secure their livelihoods. In rural areas, many ex-combatants went back to working in agriculture or mining (Fanthorpe and McConnachie 2009) whereas in urban settings, ex-combatants engaged in petty trading or became motorbike taxi drivers. In addition, many donors required ex-combatant participation as a contingency for receiving funds for particular projects. As a result, many ex-combatants took advantage of their status to build relationships with NGOs and help them obtain funding for communal projects (Bolten 2012*b*). Therefore, the DDR programme did not really resolve the underlying issues of youth unemployment and marginalisation (Peters 2007). However, some ex-combatants actively capitalised on their ex-combatant label in order to obtain resources and opportunities.

Some Sierra Leoneans did not have a favourable view of the DDR programme. They interpreted the programme as 'rewarding' ex-combatants for bad behaviour. Many were unhappy about the fact that ex-combatants were receiving benefits while only a few Sierra Leoneans received reparations (see section below). The vast majority of individuals impacted by the conflict did not receive any material compensation (Shaw 2010, 113). Rather, the Special Court *for* Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

were the mechanisms designated to provide Sierra Leoneans with justice and reconciliation.

The Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL)

Peace agreements in the 1990s had stipulated amnesty clauses for ex-combatants. However, after the RUF returned to Freetown in May 2000, Kabbah's government wrote a letter to the United Nations requesting an international criminal tribunal. In August 2000, UN Resolution 1315 established the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) as a hybrid tribunal to try individuals who "bore the greatest responsibility" for crimes committed during the war. Incorporating local components into the Court's design was part of the model touted as a 'second generation' experiment in response to many of the criticisms of the tribunals in the 1990s (Dougherty 2004; Carter 2014). Localisation of the Court referred to three key characteristics: the Court and its subsequent trials were within the borders of Sierra Leone[17]; the subject-matter jurisdiction comprised of crimes under both international and Sierra Leonean law; and the Court facilitated an outreach programme in more than 450 communities nationwide in order to have a two-way communication between Sierra Leoneans and the Court (No Peace without Justice Report 2012, 31). These factors were asserted to provide a better sense of local ownership than previous tribunals had been able to do (Smith 2004; Arzt 2006).

Head prosecutor David Crane, along with other advocates of legal justice[18], argue that the hybrid court model resulted in a successful Court that was able to deliver justice for Sierra Leoneans (Crane 2006). According to scholarly research, though, efforts to localise the Court did not necessarily produce a sense of ownership or connection for many Sierra Leoneans (Anders 2012; Mieth 2013). Furthermore, the fundamental assumptions of justice being done through a court were detached from the values and priorities of many war-affected individuals.

[17] With the exception of Charles Taylor who was tried through the Special Court established in The Hague.
[18] See for example Hollis 2015.

While the design of the Court attempted to address challenges faced by other international tribunals, the indictment process magnified how international political interests and internal political struggles were prioritised from the outset. The Court did not, for example, indict individuals such as Burkina Faso head of state, Blaise Compaore, or Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, both of whom played critical roles in providing goods and services to armed factions during the conflict. Instead, Head Prosecutor David Crane was told by US government officials to focus on indicting Charles Taylor (Mahony 2015, 91). In Sierra Leone, President Tejan Kabbah could have been tried for committing war crimes, as evidenced in the TRC final report (Vol. 3A, 273, 283 and 285-6 cited in Mahony 2015, 91). However, he was not indicted. Instead, Sam Hinga Norman, who was head of Civil Defence Forces, seen by many as a national hero and at the time Minister of the Interior, was indicted. It was well known that Norman had significant political ambitions and was seen by Kabbah's government as a threat to the party. His indictment was a convenient means through which he could be removed from the political stage (Anders 2014, 538). Thus, from the outset of its establishment, the Court was not removed from international influence or Sierra Leonean political struggles but rather became a vehicle through which they were enacted.

Ultimately, thirteen people were indicted (including Charles Taylor) – the most prominent leaders of each warring faction, namely the RUF, AFRC and CDF. Of these, three – Sam Bockarie, Foday Sankoh and Sam Hinga Norman – died prior to their trials. Johnny Paul Koroma was likely killed in Liberia but there are many who believe he is still at large (Hollis 2015). The other nine indictees were convicted of crimes to varying degrees. With the exception of Taylor (who was tried in the Hague and is currently detained in HM Prison Frankland in North East England), the other convicts are currently imprisoned in Rwanda's Mpanga prison. Thus, while court proceedings predominantly took place in Sierra Leone, the prisoners themselves do not reside within its borders.

Prosecutions were supposed to be based on a combination of both international humanitarian law and domestic law in an effort to partially localise the Court (Resolution 1315, 2000). Many legal scholars point to the Court's contributions to international jurisprudence, particularly in relation to child soldiers and gender-based crimes. For example, the Court upheld that an individual could be held criminally responsible for recruiting child soldiers into armed conflict (Novogrodsky 2014). In relation to gender-based cases, the Court also acknowledged sexual slavery as a crime against humanity and established individual criminal accountability for forced marriage (Oosterveld 2014). However, it should be noted that while the resolution makes provisions for a hybrid legal approach, no charges were laid for crimes under Sierra Leonean law. As Sierra Leonean trial attorney Abdul Tejan-Cole notes: "Crimes under Sierra Leonean law were added as some form of tokenism…[M]any of the benefits that may have been derived from the prosecution of Sierra Leonean offences, such as precedents that would have carried persuasive authority, were lost" (2009, 233). Therefore, the establishment of international precedent itself took precedent over constructing a Sierra Leonean national legal system.

Indeed, due to the hybrid model, many Sierra Leoneans did benefit from employment either at the Special Court in Freetown or as part of the outreach programmes in the districts. However, there were politics between Sierra Leonean and international staff at the Court. There were no Sierra Leoneans appointed at senior levels of the Court, which served to alienate members of the legal community. In other instances, domestic and international lawyers were not subject to equal treatment. For example, "a Sierra Leonean lawyer who had more than twenty years of prosecution experience in the national court, was given the same status and rank as a foreigner who had just passed his bar exams" (Tejan-Cole 2009, 235). Thus, while some individuals were able to take advantage of an employment opportunity due to the presence of the Special Court, there were some serious discrepancies between international and Sierra Leonean lawyers working at the Court.

In addition, the Court itself was located in Freetown, a city on the coast that is difficult to get to from rural areas where the majority of Sierra Leoneans reside. The city is at least a

day's journey from the eastern portions of Sierra Leone where the war began. Travelling from some parts of rural Bombali would also take at least a day to arrive in Freetown. Upon arriving at the actual Court itself, it is surrounded by large walls and security making it very difficult to see, even when standing in front of it. Therefore, although the Court was physically within the state's borders, it was not very accessible. The Court was physically disconnected from the majority of Sierra Leoneans.

However, in 2003, the Court began facilitating outreach programmes in regions across the country. This included town hall meetings at the district and chiefdom levels; sessions with targeted groups like police, army, victims groups, students; and media outreach such as brochures, posters, radio and video programmes (Arzt 2006, 230). However, these programmes did not necessarily validate the Court or the Court's version of justice in these areas (Kerr and Lincoln 2008; Anders 2012). In his ethnographic piece on outreach programmes, Gerhard Anders illustrates how both programme attendees and outreach officers had reservations about the Court and the Court's notion of justice, particularly the amount of money that was being spent (2012, 108). His findings about perceptions of the Court align with my own. In addition though, his descriptions of these programmes in villages reflect some of my own observations of Fambul Tok's programmes that will be discussed in later chapters.

Friederike Mieth conducted ethnographic fieldwork examining local perceptions of the SCSL. She discusses how many Sierra Leoneans described the Court's work as irrelevant to them and that it had not brought them justice. This was in large part due to the fact that their notions of justice greatly differed from how the Court understood it and that their everyday circumstances made the work of the Court less relevant to them. "For many Sierra Leoneans, the Special Court is not perceived as having delivered justice to those affected by the war" (Mieth 2013, 10). My own research yielded similar findings. The SCSL held little meaning for many individuals I interviewed. For example, one interviewee stated that while villagers had heard about it on radio, the Court "did not have any impact because we were not involved" (interview with KC, Bumban 2014). One

individual who attended a case stated: "I was a witness at the SCSL but it did not mean much. The food [the prisoners] eat in a few days would take us a few months [to get]. That is not justice" (interview with BF, Karina 2014). This is another instance of how individuals saw perpetrators benefitting from these mechanisms. The financial cost, which at the end of 2013 totalled $300 million (Gberie 2014), was also a recurrent criticism. As one interviewee noted: the Court "was important because it set a precedent, but the money spent was too much, they should have considered the victims. It only benefitted those who worked there and the international community" (interview with AM, Bumban 2014). Sierra Leoneans by and large then, were uninterested in the Court and did not relate to this legal conception of justice. Many felt that the money for the Court could have been better spent on other activities that would have had more direct benefit to a greater number of individuals, such as development projects.

The Court's foundational notion of retributive justice was also problematic. Judgments operate in a blanketed black and white manner, defining individuals as either guilty or innocent. This method failed to recognise the often-blurred statuses of many participants and did not incorporate the host of relevant actors, such as foreign states, marginal participants and bystanders (Gready 2005). In addition, the Court did not necessarily address those who bore the greatest responsibility. There was no uniform consensus as to who these individuals were and this likely differed based on individual and regional experiences of the conflict. Tim Kelsall (2010) argues in his book *Culture Under Cross-Examination* that Western legal procedures were not equipped for the local terrain. The Court was unsuited for judging men who stemmed from a specific situational and cultural context.

Therefore, this type of justice reflects Paul Gready's notion of 'distanced' justice – systems that lack domestic participation, undermine existing norms and institutions, and are often alien (both in substance and geography) to society writ large (2005, 8). If these mechanisms do not reflect conventional understandings of individuals who were the victims of the conflict (either directly or indirectly), their contribution to reconciliation

and the overall transitional justice process will be minimal. Justice at the Special Court was understood by many Sierra Leoneans to be "justice for those who had created it" (interview with DB, Karina 2014).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In the midst of the Special Court investigating and issuing indictments, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission also began their operations. The purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was twofold: first, it was supposed to impartially investigate and report the causes and nature of crimes committed during the war; second, the Commission provided individuals – categorised by the Commission as victims, perpetrators and witnesses – the opportunity to give accounts and reconcile their war-related experiences, by helping to:

> restore human dignity of victims and promote reconciliation by providing an opportunity for victims to give an account of the violations and abuses suffered and for perpetrators to relate their experiences, by creating a climate which fosters constructive interchange between victims and perpetrators (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2000, 6.2b).

The Commission also attempted to facilitate ownership by incorporating various local actors and components. The document establishing the Commission stated that they would request "assistance from traditional and religious leaders to facilitate its public sessions and in resolving local conflicts arising from the past violations or in support of healing and reconciliation" (Ibid, 7.2). The Commission promoted ownership by presenting Krio proverbs on posters and through radio shows. They also attempted to conduct ritual ceremonies in partnership with Sierra Leonean leaders at the public hearings to make the programmes more accessible and relevant to Sierra Leoneans.

The Commission, which operated from 2002-2004, worked in all districts throughout the country. To emphasise ownership and participation, the TRC stipulated that statement takers should be recruited from local NGOs and civil society groups in their respective districts so that statement givers would have confidence that these individuals were sensitive to "customs and local mores" (TRC Report 2004, Vol. 1, 93). TRC employees

encouraged individuals to come forward and tell their stories and gathered statements from across their district. They advertised it as an opportunity to "come blow your main [mind]", implying an open atmosphere to generate a '*kol at.*'[19] The commission gathered 7,700 written statements (TRC Report 2004, Vol. 1, 164), which were broadcast through public hearings, radio and electronic media.

There were, however, practical and more fundamental issues with TRC operations. From an operational perspective, finances for the Commission were limited and as a result they were only able to employ a select number of people and thus, were not able to cover as much area. In the Northern region, for example (which would have been five districts, including Bombali) there were only five statement takers and a total of 25 personnel for the entire area (interview with Usman Fornah, 2014). In addition, public hearings only took place in district capitals and, like the Special Court, many Sierra Leoneans did not have the time or the money to attend these proceedings. Thus, the geographical scope, access and participation in the process were limited, even though this programme was at district (as opposed to national) level.

Most individuals I interviewed in rural areas did not have much interaction with the TRC due to these issues. Some interviewees had heard about the Commission from radio shows, while others had not heard about it at all. Some individuals seemed to think the idea itself was good. One informant stated: "The TRC should have established a hearing here. The idea was good, but only if done at the community level" (interview with AM, Bumban 2014). Others were less optimistic: "They came to try and help us reconcile. But they were just sugar-coated words. They didn't come with money or amenities. They just came and talked and went away" (interview with DB, Karina 2014). Accordingly, not only was it difficult for individuals to access the statement takers and public hearings, the commission also did not align with their priorities at that time.

[19] Literally "cool heart".

The process and procedures of TRC interviews were also somewhat problematic. According to Reverend Doctor Usman Fornah, the head of the TRC in the Northern Region, interviews were often conducted in a very formal professional manner. In cases where statement takers conducted interviews in villages, individuals working for the commission would translate (as opposed to village members), and so senior village members often felt excluded. The content and translation of the interviews also resulted in "a lot of issues". Therefore, the means through which information was collected may have been problematic and not always sensitive to village preferences.

Furthermore, many individuals believed they would receive financial compensation for their testimony (Millar 2010; Shaw 2007). The fact that discussing war-related issues was not automatically understood as cathartic demonstrates how, like the Special Court, some of the fundamental assumptions upon which the truth commission was based may have been flawed. Anthropological literature has illustrated how many Sierra Leoneans were sceptical about a process of public remembering (Kelsall 2005; Millar 2010; Shaw 2007). The Commission's public hearings had a relatively low turnout, few ex-combatants testified and those who did were not interested in doing so to a "point of release", or for cathartic purposes. Public testimony was "formulaic" (Shaw 2010, 127) and delivered in a "detached and clinical way" (Kelsall 2005, 368). At the public hearing in Bombali, Shaw notes how only three ex-combatants testified and none acknowledged personal wrongdoing but instead sought to justify their actions (Shaw 2010, 128).

Kelsall and Shaw both argue that the ritual component of the public hearings evoked a certain emotional charge amongst some individuals (Kelsall 2005; Shaw 2010). Leaders, such as chiefs and religious leaders, were present and took part in the ritual ceremonies in an effort to better legitimise them. However, some Sierra Leoneans noted problems with these ceremonies. One report, written by a Sierra Leonean civil society group, noted that there was anger expressed about the failure to use traditional mechanisms correctly and some individuals had expressed that these mechanisms were "'customised' to fit the time available before the Commissioners and staff had to move on to their next appointment"

(Sierra Leone Working Group on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2006, 8). Therefore, the TRC's procedures as well as the fundamental assumptions upon which the commission was based did not necessarily reflect the values and priorities of many Sierra Leoneans.

Rebekka Friedman, on the other hand, argues that the TRC has perhaps been unfairly criticised as it was an organisation concentrated at the national level and working toward democratisation, reintegration and raising national awareness. She argues that when the Commission is examined through its own self-understanding, a different picture emerges. It was not necessarily that the Commission was not 'culturally relevant' but rather that it had created unrealistic expectations, which ultimately led to considerable disillusionment and disappointment. In particular, there was

> insufficient follow-up and implementation of the recommendations, and lack of ownership, particularly in the sphere of reintegration…undermining its contribution and leading to a serious legitimacy crisis and popular disenchantment (2015, 62).

Therefore, even when the Commission is examined through a broader lens, the TRC still appears to have been a disappointing endeavour to Sierra Leoneans.

Finally, the optimism surrounding the Truth Commission and Special Court operating simultaneously was based on the fact that they would address both issues of justice *and* reconciliation. Due to significant oversights, however, this 'experiment' backfired. Sierra Leoneans by and large did not understand the individual role of each institution. Ex-combatants often feared they would be tried if they testified at the Truth Commission, despite reassurance to the contrary (Shaw 2010, 120). Often when statement takers came to district capitals, ex-combatants laid low and in two towns ex-combatants drove the TRC vans away, pelting rocks and shouting, "Do you think we don't know the Special Court sent you?" (Ibid). Reverend Doctor Fornah also said that outreach offices were located in the same towns as TRC offices, which caused serious confusion. Therefore, lack of clarity certainly resulted in both bodies (although the TRC to a greater extent) suffering.

As noted above, incorporating local dimensions is central to recent academic and policy literature on transitional justice and reconciliation. While both the Special Court and Truth Commission attempted to do this, there is still abundant criticism of their ability to comprehensively reflect and incorporate the views and understandings of the people 'most affected' by the conflict. Various Sierra Leonean anthropologists note how memory does not manifest in verbally discursive forms (Shaw 2002; Coulter 2009; Jackson 2004; Ferme 2001) but rather Sierra Leoneans seek to "displace explicit verbal memories of violence through a range of social and cultural practices" (Shaw 2002; Shaw 2007). It is, therefore, interesting that Fambul Tok, an organisation seeking to implement 'traditional' means of reconciliation, with Sierra Leonean staff that speak the languages of the areas where they work, designed their programme based on similar assumptions as the TRC. As will be discussed in chapter six, during this period just after the war, Sierra Leoneans were more interested in receiving monetary compensation, like reparations, so that they would be able to obtain a 'new normal.'

Reparations

A reparations programme was also established as a result of a TRC recommendation (see TRC Report Vol 2., 20). In 2007, the government appointed the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) to implement a reparations programme when $3 million was donated by the UN Peace Building Fund to set up a Trust Fund for Victims. The government also contributed $250,000. Victims were in this instance defined as amputees and war-wounded, children, women who had suffered sexual abuse and war-widows. In 2009, over 28,000 had registered for reparations and 20,000 had benefited from $100 micro-loans and educational assistance. In addition, 200 women had been given fistula surgery due to rape-related injuries (Berghs 2012, 105-7). In so doing, such programmes created a 'hierarchy of victims' based on a subjective view of a particular type of suffering (McEvoy and McConnachie 2012, 532).

However, the government seemingly wanted to diffuse focus on material reparations in favour of promoting symbolic activities. As a result, the NGO Hope assisted in implementing symbolic reparations in villages by engaging in rituals. I personally never came across any mention of these rituals, but according to other research, the programmes largely consisted of one token representative from the NGO who facilitated the ceremony (Berghs 2012). There were also problems with information dissemination about the programme in relation to who qualified and access to registration. Therefore, due to decades of experience with clientalism and corruption, many individuals believed that NaCSA had "eaten" the money. The programme simply "corroborated the negative perception of the state as being unresponsive towards peoples' needs" and "confirmed already negative impressions" (Ottendorfer 2014, 22). Even those who did receive compensation encountered issues that resulted in communal and familial issues, such as landlords demanding higher rents (Conteh and Berghs 2014, 21-22). Therefore, while reparations were perhaps more in line with the needs and priorities of individual Sierra Leoneans, the politics surrounding the programme also reaffirmed negative perceptions of governmental institutions as well as straining relations between communities and families.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background for understanding the trajectory of the war and the recognised transitional justice process in Sierra Leone. I have illustrated how the conflict broadly transpired over the course of the 1990s, and provided a more intimate examination of how individuals negotiated their circumstances in Bombali villages. Understanding these circumstances and experiences in the context of Sierra Leone serves to frame discussions about the localisation of transitional justice in subsequent chapters.

Recognised transitional justice mechanisms implemented in Sierra Leone were, in many ways, based on blueprints of prior institutions and programmes initially tailored to fit a different context. Mechanisms in Sierra Leone were altered to address criticisms of prior

processes and programmes by incorporating certain components relating to place, culture and tradition in an effort to establish them as more local. Practitioners, however, frequently fail to consider that reinventing the same mechanism in a different place, even if it does include what are perceived to be local components, does not account for the diverse ways individuals experience conflict, nor does it necessarily reflect their values and priorities. These 'external' interpretations may be more reflective of programme designers' and implementers' perceptions of 'the local', than the actual diverse priorities and experiences of programme beneficiaries.

The TRC Working group concluded that there were many Sierra Leoneans who were unable or unwilling to engage with the Truth Commission. As a result, its chair, John Caulker, founded Fambul Tok to facilitate programmes for Sierra Leoneans in rural areas in order to help them move past their war-related experiences. While Fambul Tok was founded by a Sierra Leonean and operates in Sierra Leone, it is still *an institution* dependent on international resources and structures, just like many other organisations based in Sierra Leone. However, it was individual Sierra Leoneans who ultimately shaped Fambul Tok's programmes based on their own needs and priorities. The next two chapters will focus on Fambul Tok. I will first look at the organisation's discursive and on-the-ground engagements with notions of ownership and the 'local'. I will then examine how the programmes were interpreted and appropriated by individual Sierra Leoneans.

Chapter 4: 'Local ownership is not zero sum': Examining Fambul Tok Discourses, the 'Local' and Ownership

Introduction

Fambul Tok has become a familiar name to individuals working in transitional justice, peacebuilding and reconciliation. As highlighted in the introduction, many academics have cited Fambul Tok as an example of a locally owned programme that facilitates transitional justice and reconciliation processes (Cilliers *et al.* 2016; Friedman 2015; Iliff 2012; Lambourne 2016; Mitton 2015*b*; Park 2010; Schotmans 2012; Sharp 2014; Sriram 2013; Stovel 2010). Yet academic analysis of Fambul Tok is generally very thin[20], and does not comprehensively analyse the organisation's discourse and media, nor does this analysis necessarily look at the interpretations and experiences of individuals participating in the programme. These next two chapters will explore the concepts of the 'local' and ownership through the Fambul Tok case study. This chapter will look at the background of the organisation and provide a discourse analysis of their media projects' notions of the 'local' and ownership, which will then be contrasted with my own fieldwork observations. I will argue that Fambul Tok's discourse oversimplifies both the 'local' and ownership.

[20] Friedman, Cilliers *et al*. and Stovel are the exceptions (see introduction).

It is necessary to examine and disaggregate the many individuals who constitute the local (including internationals) to better understand how local ownership is constructed. Local ownership will be further explored in the next chapter, which analyses how individuals appropriated Fambul Tok's programmes to suit their own needs and priorities.

Local ownership (or some related term) is now commonly employed in international development, security and post-conflict policy (Mac Ginty 2015). Yet, as Dustin Sharp notes: "Local ownership has become something of an empty signifier, employed by nearly everyone, while at the same time remaining vague and poorly understood" (2014, 101). As outlined in the literature review, the 'local' is commonly conflated with domestic or national (Ozerdem and Lee 2015) as well as notions of tradition and culture (Shaw and Waldorf 2010). Ownership, as discussed in the literature review, also refers to a broad range of engagements, from individuals 'buying-in' to the programme (Chesterman 2007) to local individuals actually designing and implementing programmes themselves (Lundy and McGovern 2008; Nathan 2007). These definitions are, however, oversimplified and do not account for the various actors at play in such processes and programmes, including donors, directors, district staff and participants. All of these individuals shape the programme. The donors, director and district staff also influence how the programme is projected, both to international audiences and beneficiaries. As I will illustrate in this chapter, these narratives are different for different audiences. Examining these dynamics and interactions between different individuals is critical to gaining a more holistic picture of how such organisations operate, how the 'local' and ownership are constructed and what this means for the programme in practice.

Fambul Tok's media places a significant emphasis on their locality and their unique ability to facilitate participation and ownership. One of Fambul Tok's core values states that the organisation "walks with communities to find their own answers". Fambul Tok's staff are all Sierra Leonean, from different backgrounds and different regions. Staff often (although not always) speak the languages of their respective district and spend significant periods of time in villages with the participants. The origins of the ceremonies are also

said to derive from Sierra Leonean culture and traditions. Practically speaking though, they depend on international actors for financial support and therefore, must speak the 'language of the 'local'' as understood by these individuals (discussed further below). The actual organisational operation is much different though. From the perspective of their participants, the organisation is one small component of much broader social and political contexts. Thus the organisation's media does not reflect how Fambul Tok (and in turn, the 'local') is in fact subject to fraught divisions and hierarchies; this reality necessitates scholarly attention to individual activities and perspectives.

This chapter explores Fambul Tok's origins and discourses in relation to the 'local' and ownership and how the organisation also conflates itself with the 'national' (Sierra Leonean) – in contrast to the international – as well as with notions of tradition and culture. I argue that while the organisation does place significant emphasis on local ownership, how they project notions of the 'local' and 'ownership' in their media does not reflect the complex realities and interactions amongst the various actors involved in constructing and maintaining the programme. This chapter is split into two parts: the first part looks at how the organisation projects notions of the 'local' and ownership through its media. Its media discourses are contrasted in the second part with the organisation's engagements in villages, where global discourses of transitional justice are "translated" (Merry 2006) or "vernacularised" (Levitt and Merry 2009) into frames more familiar to Sierra Leonean audiences, analysing what this says more broadly about the 'local' and ownership. I first explore the organisation's origins and the relationship between the organisation and its American counterpart, Catalyst for Peace, looking at how these interactions have transformed since the organisation since its inception in 2007, and how the 'local' is frequently equated with national, or the geographic boundaries of Sierra Leone. I then look at how its media conflates the 'local' with notions of culture and tradition. I further explore how ownership is projected by examining the story of Mohamed Savage in the organisation's documentary. I then look at the organisational and individual role of 'translators' (Merry 2006) to understand the relationship between the director, district staff and programme participants. The final section concludes with an in-depth analysis of the

complexities and hierarchies situated within the 'local' and what it means for its definition and the organisation's operation.

Fambul Tok Origins, Transformation and the Local as National

Fambul Tok was founded in 2008 by current Executive Director, John Caulker. Caulker was a human rights activist throughout the war and in 1996 founded an organisation called Forum of Conscience that documented war-related atrocities and, later, attempted to advocate on behalf of rural areas in an effort to ensure their voices were included in the more elite level discussions with regards to the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms. While President Kabbah was exiled in Conakry in 1997, Caulker coordinated a committee with other civil society leaders to consider a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission that would allow individuals to apply for amnesty on the condition that they spoke the whole truth. The committee presented a written plan to the President and, according to Caulker, it was this document that commenced the discussions about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Fambul Tok book 2011, 20, 24-27).

As discussions about the TRC's design were underway, Caulker advocated the establishment of mini-commissions in rural areas, which would feed into the larger one because individuals would, he argued, feel more comfortable telling their stories in familiar surroundings. However, according to Caulker, the idea was dismissed because nothing like this had ever been done before (Fambul Tok book 2011, 27). John was outspoken in his criticisms of the TRC and the failure of the United Nations to think more creatively about how to engage ordinary Sierra Leoneans in this process (interview with former board member, 2015) and as a result, his relationship with these organisations became strained. Nonetheless, he was the head of a civil society group known as the TRC Working Group, which in 2006 published a report entitled *Searching for Truth and Reconciliation in Sierra Leone: An Initial Study of the Performance and Impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Section 1.4 addresses the issues of ownership and participation. The report criticises the TRC for insufficiently localising the Commission:

"While this failure partly reflected lack of funds, it also reflected a reluctance to develop a genuine partnership with local civil society organisations that could have assisted" (p. 8). They further stated that the reconciliation mechanisms encouraged by the TRC were not traditional or contextually appropriate for Sierra Leoneans. In many ways these criticisms defined what the organisation *would not* do.

In 2007, Sara Terry, a documentarian and photographer, met with Caulker during a visit to Sierra Leone. At the time, she was working on documenting stories of reconciliation throughout Africa with an American foundation called Catalyst for Peace, run by Libby Hoffmann. Catalyst for Peace (CfP) was founded in 2003 after Libby inherited money from a family real estate business. Hoffman emphasises a real passion for her work: "[W]ith these resources, I saw I had an opportunity so breath-taking it was more of an obligation. I could help bring into being what I thought the world most needed. I had the resources to do the work I most wanted to do: catalyse peace" (Catalyst for Peace website). CfP spent their first five years doing peacebuilding exercises, such as workshops, and documentation worldwide. It was during one of their programmes taking place in Sierra Leone that Terry, leading the programme at the time, met Caulker.

In the autumn of 2007, Libby and John met and discussed their vision for a more localised transitional justice and reconciliation programme in Sierra Leone. In November 2007 they held a meeting in Washington between Sierra Leonean civil society elites, such as Reverend Doctor Fornah (discussed in the previous chapter) and staff from Eastern Mennonite University[21] to discuss how to take the programme and organisation forward, and it was at this conference that the name Fambul Tok ("family talk" in Krio) was born (interview with Libby Hoffman). The programme initially began under the Forum for Conscience but as Fambul Tok grew, it was decided that it would become a separate organisation. It was in these initial phases that John undertook village consultations in which he asked villagers were ready to reconcile. The organisation's initial consultations

[21] This University has fairly well known academics in their Peace and Development Programme.

were in Kailahun district, where the war had started and where the RUF was based for the majority of the conflict. Ultimately, the programme spread to six of the fourteen districts in Sierra Leone (Kailahun, Kono, Moyamba, Koinadugu, Bombali and, more recently, Pujehun).

Fambul Tok began organising bonfires in 2008, where both victims and perpetrators (as they are referred to by the organisation) were free to discuss their war-related experiences. Perpetrators can publicly apologise for their wrongdoing and victims may accept. Individuals may also simply tell their stories without intention of reconciling with the person who hurt them. After the ceremony, Fambul Tok also encourages village members to form groups and engage in development-related activities that are meant to continue to aid villages in cultivating unity. These activities included the designation of peace trees, which act as locations for settling disputes; radio listening clubs where people can broadcast issues through the Sierra Leone Broadcasting service from their particular districts; football for reconciliation (which was run as a partnership with the organisation Play31) to facilitate matches between villages within a section for youths; and community farms, which provide spaces for victims and perpetrators to work together (Fambul Tok book 2011, 86-88). This model ultimately became the skeleton of the organisation's programme.

In 2010, after the organisation had started working in the first five districts, Fambul Tok and Catalyst for Peace merged and became Fambul Tok International (FTI). The programme headquarters (or international NGO) was based in Freetown and the corporate headquarters was in Portland, Maine (where Catalyst for Peace is based). During this period the organisation had a board of advisors that included well known Sierra Leoneans and academics. Maintaining headquarters in Freetown demonstrates how defining the 'local' was equated with geographic location. Sierra Leone – the national – was understood in this instance to be local.

The 'International' was incorporated into the name because both organisations understood the lessons *from Sierra Leone* to be international. As Caulker states: "While it was born here, the approach is international" (Fambul Tok book 2011, 33). This point generalises both Sierra Leone and the international as homogeneous groups and illustrates how these discourses reified the 'local' and the 'global'. In addition, the organisation had discussed expanding the programme to other countries (in fact, when I was working with Fambul Tok in 2012 there were some discussions about taking the programme to Liberia). This concept of expansion further takes away from their core values in relation to localisation and local ownership, because if the programme is in fact specific to Sierra Leone, it should not necessarily be so easily transferable to another context.

The merger between CfP and Fambul Tok did not last. Ultimately, it put additional stress on the organisation and hurt Fambul Tok's image of locality. According to Hoffman:

> The pressure to grow was not helpful for the national work and we consciously made the decision to grow the national work and national organisation…It felt like it was growing too soon. There were other ways of sharing the lessons and we from a Catalyst for Peace perspective could share the lessons and process and how to work this way and that would not pressure Fambul Tok to grow in ways that would take away from its national work. It made sense the leadership of Fambul be fully national not even indirectly based in the US (interview with Hoffman).

Hoffman continuously emphasises this notion of national and in this sense is homogenising Sierra Leoneans as one group. A former board member also stated that Fambul Tok's international NGO status was problematic in terms of funding. While Catalyst for Peace was (and still is) the main funding body, Fambul Tok's ability to obtain sources of funding became challenging due to its 'international' (as opposed to local) status (Ibid). Hoffman also confirmed that in some instances other donors were interested in contributing funds to a *local* organisation (with the geographic confines of Sierra Leone) but did not understand how one component of it was based in Sierra Leone and the other was based in the US. This arrangement proved problematic and so, in 2012, the organisation was again restructured and ultimately became a Sierra Leonean NGO without any formal connection to CfP. These changes had a positive impact and "a year after they became national, they started getting grants" (former board member 2015). By becoming

a solely Sierra Leonean NGO, their image of locality was reaffirmed. Mac Ginty (2008) points out how international donors' conditions often require local actors to be involved in operationalizing programmes. However, 'local' in these contexts often equates with 'national'. Therefore, the simple fact of the NGO being based in Sierra Leone was enough to secure further funding.

The history of Fambul Tok and its transformation exemplifies how discourses of the 'local' are often equated with national. In some of its media, the global/local distinction is also asserted. For example, Fambul Tok's book presents this dichotomy by stating, "Fambul Tok is a distinctly Sierra Leonean initiative. It is not rooted in Western concepts of blame and retribution, but rather in African communal sensibilities that emphasize the need for communities to be whole, with each member playing a role" (Fambul Tok Book 2011, 79). This reinforces the Western/non-Western dichotomy. In addition, the director of the documentary had this distinction in mind while she was working on the film:

> At the heart of this film is a decision made early on that there would be no Western voices in this narrative – no Western experts, no Western reports who covered the war, no Western archival footage. I believe the West has had more than its fair share of opportunity to tell Africa's stories, to tell the stories of Sierra Leone, to be the arbiters and filters of a culture we don't even begin to understand. I believe, quite firmly, that we should stop talking about saving Africa, and start coming to this continent and its people – to the people of Sierra Leone – with the humble desire to learn from their great wisdom (Director's Note, Fambul Tok DVD).

By only featuring Sierra Leoneans, Terry is attempting to enhance the local nature of the film. However, the discourse falls victim to the dichotomisation of 'Africa versus the West' and in so doing, generalises the very people she attempts to give voice to. By conforming to the reification of the global and local "it assumes that there are only two levels at which these social processes emerge and unfold" (Goodale 2007, 14). Therefore, while these discourses perhaps conform to donor desires and regulations, they contradict Fambul Tok's core value of recognising the diversity of the people with whom they work and "going to communities with an open mind" (Fambul Tok book 2011, 33). Furthermore, this oversimplification of the 'local' as 'national' does not account for the various power dynamics unfolding between individuals in different settings, and the

general fluidity of power and status in different places at different times. These dynamics will be further analysed in the second half of this chapter.

Fambul Tok Media: Projecting Culture and Tradition

Like many other local transitional justice and reconciliation programmes, Fambul Tok also seeks to emphasise the critical role of tradition and culture in its discourses and programmes. The organisation has a nice website, a documentary DVD about their programme and a book with professional photos, all of which project powerful dramatic imagery of Sierra Leoneans engaging with purported traditional and cultural components in order to move past their war-related experiences. These media projects are a means of promoting the organisation's approach and work. In so doing, the organisation's representations equate the 'local' with notions of culture and tradition.

The general premise of the organisation, according to their narrative, is based on tradition. The notion of Fambul Tok (family talk in Krio) is described in the DVD as an old tradition. Caulker states: "It's as old as Sierra Leone itself. It's a way of resolving disputes as a community, as a family" (Caulker in Fambul Tok DVD). Centralising the notion of family talk as traditional and essential to the social fabric of Sierra Leone immediately provides foundational justification and legitimacy for the organisation's programme.

Using tradition in this way was also critical to the justification and implementation of the bonfire ceremony. The organisation frames it as a sacred setting for these discussions in both the DVD and the book. Caulker emphasises how these types of dialogues come from a culture of storytelling. In the DVD, he explains that in the evenings people would sit around the fire and talk about the day's events. Thus, the bonfire is understood to be a comfortable and familiar place for individuals to come together and discuss experiences. In the book Caulker further explains:

> I would call the Fambul Tok bonfire the sacred space in the sense that it's only within that circle, within that bonfire that you can say anything you want related to the war. You can call on anyone who did something bad to you, regardless of his or her status, even a chief or minister. Once you are in that sacred space you feel empowered, because you know the community is behind you and whatever you say, as long as it's the truth (Fambul Tok book 2011, 37).

The bonfire is thus portrayed as a space "safeguarded by tradition and culture" (Fambul Tok book 2011, 56) where ordinary people can discuss their war-related experiences and engage in inter-personal reconciliation in a familiar, comfortable setting. This ceremony has been highlighted as central to the organisation's work. In their media, it would appear to be their main focus. There are extensive images of the bonfire in DVD and on their website and particularly breath-taking photos in the book. They illustrate stunning imagery of light sneaking into the darkness, of people standing next to the fire and becoming illuminated as they speak and engage with one another. It is as though the organisation has 'brought light' to an otherwise dark and disturbed community. These dramatic images visibly emphasise the powerful nature of employing cultural and traditional mechanisms.

Figure 1.4 Fambul Tok Bonfire, accessed at: http://www.voanews.com/a/family-talk-heals-old-civil-war-wounds-in-rural-sierra-leone-95817519/119068.html

Not only does the bonfire itself draw on tradition (according to the organisation's discourse) but cultural traditions that derive from the particular operational area are also incorporated into the ceremony; for example, dancers and music that are often geographically or tribally specific. In addition, the morning after the bonfire ceremonies, villages also initiate cleansing ceremonies that derive from and emphasise their "rich cultural heritage [which] is a resource Sierra Leoneans can use to foster a secure peace"

(Fambul Tok book 2011, 86). Each village has a particular shrine to their ancestors, often in a more isolated area. Caulker explains that talking to ancestors is a big part of Sierra Leonean culture and if these ancestors are not pleased, people will have bad luck: "Asking for their blessing is a very important part of the reconciliation process. They touch the hearts of the victims because the victims need spiritual support to accept the offenders, and this helps provide that" (Fambul Tok book 2011, 34). The book also quotes a town chief stating: "The ancestors were very angry with us. They were neglected. Now they're happy because we paid them some respect. With Fambul Tok we [re-]learned the value of the ancestors" (Fambul Tok book 2011, 34) Accordingly, the organisation's media also equate the 'local' with various ceremonial components of Sierra Leone's 'rich' culture and tradition. In so doing, Sierra Leoneans are able to revive what is apparently a key cornerstone of social relations. However, there is little interrogation by the organisation about why such traditions had been abandoned, whether individuals had re-initiated these rituals themselves at some point after the conflict and if they had not, why they had chosen not to. Traditional and cultural components are simply assumed to be a viable mode through which people desired moving past their war-related experiences.

While Hoffman recognised that the 'culture of storytelling' did not refer to discussing war-related experiences previously, she said, "They had a tradition and it was based in the understanding that the community can create a safe space for apology and forgiveness…[T]he culture of silence played on after the war…[because] culture and tradition had not been activated in their way" (interview with Hoffman). In addition, in Benedict Sannoh's[22] account in the Fambul Tok book, he states: "In the face of amnesty granted to perpetrators…traditional and cultural rituals provide the only mechanisms to bring the victims and perpetrators together" (114). These discourses evidence how the notion of *mobilising* culture and *reviving* tradition are central to the organisation's programme. However, at no point are these terms 'culture' and 'tradition', ever really

[22] A lawyer who served a Chief of the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice initiative at the UN Mission in Sierra Leone.

defined. Rather, they appear to be used interchangeably and loosely refer to apparently unique aspects of the Sierra Leonean context, and equated with the 'local'.

Both the organisation and their discourses seem to follow on from more recent trends in local transitional justice and peacebuilding disciplines, as discussed in the literature review. While some scholars claim that invoking tradition and culture make mechanisms more legitimate and effective (Huyse 2008), others recognise this discourse as problematic, in large part because people implementing these programmes tend to treat tradition and culture as stagnant entities that are not subject to change or transformation, nor do they seem to recognise the diverse engagements with such dynamic processes. Adam Branch argues in relation to the Acholi rituals in Northern Uganda that to question such traditional mechanisms

> would require the refutation of the discourse of ethnojustice, its myth of primitive unanimism, and its assertion of a timeless, ahistorical cultural identity. It would require the admission that internal plurality, conflict, and contestation have always characterized Acholi society, and the recognition of the many traditions found *within* Acholi society pertaining to the spiritual world and to justice (2011, 177).

While Fambul Tok's programme does attempt to incorporate some nuance based on the particular location of the programme, its discourses still tend to suggest that these traditions and cultural norms are uniform and somehow unchanging, regardless of where they are implementing their programme. Further, such discourses tend to frame conflicts as "the collapse of traditional values and social harmony, the disappearance of ritual practices that enforced such harmony, and the loss of authority among elders and other traditional leaders" (Branch 2011, 155). In so doing, these frameworks infer that such shifts were 'bad' and old traditions were somehow better on the sole basis that they were designated as traditional. However, as evidenced in the last chapter, elements that would fall under the umbrella of traditional, such as the chieftaincy system, were primary driving factors of the war (Richards 2002; Jackson 2007). Therefore, it is certainly worth questioning whether mobilising culture and reviving tradition (whatever these concepts may mean) are in fact useful mechanisms, and whether the "traditions" being revived are in fact unanimously accepted, desired and understood as "traditions".

In reality, social processes in Sierra Leone have changed significantly since the end of the war. Sierra Leoneans, particularly youth, were exposed not only to violence and significant hardships but were also subjected to a significant influx of foreign enterprises, both military and civilian, which had not previously been prevalent in the country. As a man from Bambun stated: "Modernisation is happening now, not like before. People…picked up new habits. They witnessed defiance and picked it up. A young girl who stayed with rebels changed her style of dressing and talking…when those guys came, the language, manner, awareness all changed" (interview with AM, Bumban 2014). He went on to explain how women were now getting pregnant much younger due to their exposures from the war (many individuals pointed this out in different areas). The conflict brought an influx of foreign ideas via both rebel groups and foreigners. They not only 'brought peace' but NGOs also imported a certain set of values and norms that, according to Sierra Leoneans, has continued to be influential.

I was also informed that men and women were entering secret societies at much younger ages, much to the dismay of many elders. This is in large part due to the fact that there was a shift in values. As my research assistant explained, secret societies used to serve as a major agent of socialisation that taught basic livelihood skills, but after the war formal education became more popular and important, and has thus replaced the purpose of secret societies. People now understand this to be a primarily symbolic ritual that allows them to engage in privileged social networks. They can now enter at a very young age and the initiation is a very short period of time (in his experience only 24 hours) whereas it used to be a full month and it symbolised a definitive entry into manhood. Thus, these 'traditions' have changed due to shifts in values and exchanges during the war and post-war eras.

Many elders would also often state that the youth were not as respectful as they once were. The conflict had changed their attitudes and resulted in 'defiant' and questioning youth. The conflict has therefore resulted in significant changes to the traditions that the

organisation may be attempting to capitalise upon. The fact that such changes have occurred demonstrates how stagnant notions of culture and tradition cannot define the 'local', because these concepts are as fluid and dynamic as the local itself. Further, to encourage a re-engagement with particular traditional and cultural components is to overlook the unrecognised processes that had already occurred, in large part due to the agency of individuals in many rural areas. Values and norms are constantly shifting and changing due to new influences and interactions. Therefore, the answer is not necessarily to look back to old traditional and cultural practices, whatever these may be, but rather to look at the activity currently taking place for a better understanding of the 'local'.

Fambul Tok's Ownership: Discourse and Practice

As discussed in the literature review, ownership has a broad range of meanings and implications. Ownership can refer to anything from a 'buy-in' to a particular programme (Chesterman 2007), to individuals designing, managing and implementing programmes themselves (Lundy and McGovern 2008; Nathan 2007). This section will demonstrate how the organisation portrays its programme as owned by the participants, by discussing and analysing the story of Mohamed Savage in the documentary.

Fambul Tok places a particularly substantial emphasis on local ownership in many of its materials and narratives. Five of its nine core values implicitly and explicitly refer to ownership:

- Meeting people where they are, in their home communities, to listen and learn
- Walking with communities as they find their own answers
- Respect for, and revival of, traditions and culture
- Total community participation and ownership
- Honesty and respect for all people

Caulker emphasises that "working with the community doesn't mean coming with a checklist but rather coming with an open mind and engaging with the community. You have to work with people and see through their own lens how they see things, not come

watching through your own prism from the outside" (Fambul Tok book 2011, 33). In the book, Hoffman also explains how:

> Fambul Tok works to reweave the social fabric of communities by mobilising community members to design and run their own healing processes: there's nobody coming in from the outside, saying, "Let me show you how to do these things." Fambul Tok gives people the opportunity to say what they want in their experience, to look at the resources they already have, to decide what they want to do (Fambul Tok book: 2011, 79).

Therefore, the organisation portrays ownership as the engagement of villagers in the programme design, as opposed to having a pre-designed programme in which individuals can participate. According to the organisation's discourse, they do not explain how justice and reconciliation should be done, but rather ask individuals what they desire and how best to facilitate these programmes and processes. Hoffman goes on to further state that the defining element of the organisation's approach is not

> a certain activity set or technique, but rather a perspective…[T]he answers are there,' we say. Our fundamental operating assumption is that communities – even those most devastated by years of war and poverty – have within themselves the resources they need for their own healing and recovery (Fambul Tok book 2011, 99).

In this sense, the organisation's discourses demonstrate how it is not bringing anything to villages, but rather attempting to initiate the agency of participants in order to help them realise and actualise their own capacity in moving past their war-related experiences. In essence, the organisation believes that the resources already exist, they just need to be mobilised. The organisation's projection of ownership is closer to Lundy and McGovern's definition, in that it is assisting villages in designing and implementing these programmes based on the values and desires of the villages. The story of Captain Savage will delineate some of the complexities surrounding the notion of ownership.

Captain Savage Story

The story begins at the end of the primary documentary wherein Caulker and Mohamed Savage are having a conversation (this encounter is also discussed in Sara Terry's chapter in the book). Savage is initially hesitant to admit who he is. The documentary shows him watching a message from a woman who was impacted by violence under his orders during

the conflict. He claims it was the first time he heard a message from the people who suffered under his command. He then says,

> I am the Savage. I am the one they call Mr. Die. Whatever people say I'm not here to challenge or to brag or boast about it. I just want to shed some light…Talking about peace now, I believe people must understand exactly my plight…I'm free today, but within my conscience I'm not free because there are things point at me.

Savage and Caulker have a further exchange. Savage then states: "I am now trying to get my life. For the past nine/ten years I was not in life, I was just doing things…I need to reconcile with my people. I worked hard for this land, as a soldier, I must reconcile with my people." Mohamed Savage, who was originally from Kono district, was a very well-known combatant during the war. He not only commanded and committed violent acts in Kono, but I also encountered his name during interviews in Bombali district. He was a particularly notorious ex-combatant so this was a fairly high profile individual to come forward and participate in Fambul Tok's programme.

The DVD ends at this point with a postscript stating that the SCSL was still able to issue indictments so the organisation decided to abstain from holding a bonfire. However, an epilogue film was made to capture the Savage bonfire, which took place in November 2010. The dramatic opening line states: "Savage decided he could wait no longer. He asked Fambul Tok again for help to go home." This shorter film, found as part of the extras in the DVD, focuses solely on the town of Tombodu, where Savage had been a commander. The film begins with Caulker going to the chiefdom where he speaks to individuals in the village. They show a discussion with the paramount chief and an individual who state that they are not interested in seeing Savage in their village. One man said to Caulker: "Fambul Tok, you come play your part but it's really difficult." The film also shows the chief stating, "[F]or him to come now and say sorry, I don't believe it's going to be enough but what else can you do?" Caulker also says on camera that it took a full month to "engage the community because the way we work has to be owned and led by the people." These narratives illustrate the initial reluctance of individuals to participate in the programme and to see Savage in their village.

The bonfire did ultimately proceed. In the film there is a very big crowd. Lots of people are talking and chatting. It began with many individuals telling stories of Savage's "savagery". Prior to his testimony, the chief stands up and requests, "I want to ask you all to exercise patience, so Mohamed Savage can explain himself to us. With all that Savage did, it is really hard for such a man to come forward…to meet the people that he wronged and asked for forgiveness." It is as though the chief must first demonstrate his approval for this event, an initial point illustrating that the local itself is indeed the subject of hierarchy and power (see section below for further detail). The chief is thus used as an intermediary between the organisation, Savage and village members. Savage then stands up and gives his speech. He states (in part):

> …Everything that happened is senseless to me. I did not join the army to harm my people, I never wanted to be their enemy, and we were responsible for killings during the war. God created us all. I call on the chief, the Mammy queen, the pastor, the imam and I kneel, I ask for forgiveness, I am the only one here to beg tonight. I ask for forgiveness. I also have a pain that is within me, it is not easy for me to speak with you. It was within me, myself to come back to my people to clear myself. That is why I will never go back to the military…I am begging you for one more thing. Let us hold this peace with two hands. If it was not for this war, I do not think bad things would have happened between us. Sorrow is something one cannot be proud of. I thank you people.

This bonfire ceremony provided Savage the opportunity to explain his perspective, attempting to justify his actions in the context of conflict, but also offered him the chance to apologise. Interestingly, though, not many people had actually known his face during the war. According to a former Fambul Tok staff member, Savage used to go running near the village frequently, so he was physically present long before the bonfire but no one had recognised him. Villagers only knew his name from the stories they had heard. Accordingly, after the bonfire many individuals attempted to go up and touch him to see if he was in fact real. This anecdote illustrates that individual anger was in fact directed at an idea of a particular person, rather than a known individual. By learning the person's identity, a new physical dimension became a part of their knowledge about these incidents. Whether it was as a result or in spite of Savage's physical presence, individuals responded in diverse ways (described in further detail below).

The film, however, portrays the aftermath much differently. While individuals were initially hesitant to allow Savage to come and speak, after his speech, the film then focuses on people's ability to forgive, both at the bonfire and the next day. In one interview a woman says she had forgiven him. Another woman said she wanted to re-establish her relationship with him and would greet him. The chief stated that "when [Savage] went on his knees and asked for forgiveness, I believed he was really speaking from his heart; personally, it changed my views about him." These testimonies starkly contrast to the initial hesitations presented. The film illustrates Fambul Tok's impact in facilitating forgiveness and reconciliation within villages, even with someone so "savage". However, it does beg the question of to what extent ownership equates to initiation and design by the villagers themselves.

The film ends by examining how Savage will move forward. He explains his relief in speaking out openly. The cameras also follow individuals to what was referred to as the Savage pit (an area where his victims had been buried) to conduct the cleansing ceremony. They also show clips from a Fambul Tok-sponsored football match, which sought to provide Savage with an opportunity to integrate with village members in a more jovial, informal setting. The conclusion of the film emphasises that Savage will continue to cultivate this relationship between himself and the village.

While the film seeks to demonstrate village engagement with the programme and their willingness to forgive and reintegrate Mohamed Savage, the film actually evidenced some of the issues with ownership in practice. First, this case illustrates how it was the perpetrator, rather than the village, whose 'plight' was being privileged. This is evidenced by the fact that it took the organisation over a month to allow the bonfire to take place. Savage was an incredibly brutal perpetrator for the duration of the conflict. It has even been said he was mentally insane, once chained to a tree in Koinadugu because he was deemed "too dangerous and completely unmanageable" (Marks 2013, 254). The 'pit' featured in the film is even mentioned in the Truth Commission report (see Volume 3A). The film frames these memories of Savage's wrongdoings as a significant ongoing issue

for individuals. But if the programme was not desired, then why did the organisation urge Tombodu to participate in it? There appeared to be a real belief that if individuals could be convinced to participate, perhaps it would bring them a sense of peace they were unaware they could know. This reflects Harri Englund's encounters with Malawian civic education officers who explained how "'the community' had to realise that 'it' had problems and moreover that [the organisation] could assist it in solving these problems" (2006, 101). Therefore, the fundamental assumption upon which the bonfire was based may have been seriously flawed. Engagement and action in this particular case was based on what the organisation felt was 'correct' or necessary for the village. The programme was not in fact designed or owned by the village, but rather persistently pursued by the organisation, thereby demonstrating more of a 'buy-in' (Chesterman 2007) than village design and management of this programme.

In addition, the film demonstrates how many individuals had positive reactions after the bonfire. In fact, according to a former staff member who attended this bonfire, individuals had different reactions to Savage's presence. Some were unhappy about his presence and did not accept his apology, while others were interested to know who he was and did accept his apology (staff member). The film does not necessarily address these diverse sentiments, nor does it deal with other areas where Savage was active during the conflict. Rather, it portrays individuals who were able to accept his apology for the purposes of illustrating the success and impact of its programme. However, as discussed further in the next chapter, individuals engaged with and interpreted Fambul Tok's programme in different ways. As a result, neither ownership nor the local can be understood as any one thing. Rather, these notions are fluid and dynamic, which is why it is more important to examine the actual activity of individuals in relation to and outside of these processes and programmes, than to measure their success and effectiveness against the organisation's goals.

Fambul Tok Discourses in Villages: Translators and Vernacularisation

The second half of this chapter focuses on the interaction between the organisation and village members. In the first part of this section I look at how staff vernacularise transitional justice and reconciliation concepts into frameworks more familiar to villagers. This section also examines how the organisation itself is used as a conduit for other international programmes, thereby also enacting a translation role. In the next section I analyse what these interactions indicate about notions of locality and ownership.

Vernacularisation refers to "the ideas and practices of one group and present[ing] them in terms that another group will accept" (Levitt and Merry 2009, 446). This means that global discourses are appropriated and adapted by individuals in order to make them more accessible to audiences who may not be familiar with the original discourses. The individuals who work as intermediaries between these different contexts and dialects are translators who "remake transnational ideas into local terms" (Merry 2006, 42). Fambul Tok staff are the translators responsible for vernacularising these concepts into different, more meaningful frames.[23]

As I observed at various meetings leading up to the bonfire, staff did not use terminology like 'transitional justice,' 'reconciliation' or 'trauma' to frame discussions about war-related experiences. Broadly speaking, general discourses relating to implementing or engaging with transitional justice or reconciliation programmes seek to help societies "heal their wounds" and move past experiences that occurred during violent or authoritarian periods. Fambul Tok staff, however, vernacularised these discourses by engaging with more abstract moral concepts. The staff discuss the impacts of violence, not in terms of trauma or psychological issues, but rather how the conflict resulted in "bad culture"[24] such as: people are now jealous, they don't give to the sick, they eat too much,

[23] Please note that both of these concepts were developed by Sally Engle Merry (and Peggy Levitt) in the past decade in two different articles. I use vernaculisation to describe the discursive shifts and translators to refer to the individuals enacting vernacularisation.

[24] This reference to culture is behavioural, as opposed to the notion of culture discussed in previous sections.

girls dress inappropriately and individuals are no longer "godfearing". Therefore, in order to overcome this 'bad culture' the village must become unified because there is "no development without peace". In order to become united, people must get their experiences "off their chest" and discuss their war-related experiences at the bonfire ceremony.

In these ways, by discussing how the conflict has impacted villages, Fambul Tok staff translated notions of healing and trauma (from the global discourse on transitional justice and reconciliation) into a vernacular discourse about 'bad culture,' a framework that the audiences appeared to understand and agree with, as the nods and vocal clicks of agreement would suggest. This ultimately led to the discussion and conclusion that the organisation's programme was the solution to overcoming these issues, much like how transitional justice discourses frame their mechanisms as the paths to achieving concepts like peace, justice and reconciliation.

While individual staff vernarcularise these global discourses into familiar frames of reference, the organisation itself is also a conduit through which larger international organisations can operate their programmes. This system allows Fambul Tok to capitalise on other funding opportunities in addition to those provided by Catalyst for Peace. However, it also requires Fambul Tok to incorporate other activities outside of their original scope and purpose. In 2013, they partnered with other civil society organisations[25] and were funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to campaign against violence during the national presidential elections. The initiative was entitled 'Wi Na Wan Fambul' and attempted to promote peace through village dialogues throughout Sierra Leone (not just the districts they worked in) (Yarjoh 2011).

[25] Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Search for Common Ground, Advocacy Movement Network (AMNET) and the Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA). Yarjoh, S. 2011. 'Fambul Tok forms partnership for national reconciliation.' Fambul Tok blog. Available at: http://www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/fambul-tok-forms-parnership-for-national-reconciliation.

Fambul Tok also participated in a DFID-funded programme entitled 'Access to Justice', which enlisted organisations in Sierra Leone to facilitate sectional dialogues that provided individuals with an overview of various human rights and national laws. At one meeting I attended, staff discussed customary laws for marriages (and encouraged individuals to register their marriages in Makeni); different types of domestic violence; property rights; children's rights as well as human trafficking. During the dialogue there was little effort to reframe (or vernacularise) the concepts. Rather, this was much more of a scripted list that was read to attendees. This session was held in the middle of the day, was not well attended and apart from a select few, was not engaging to those present. It was evidently outside the scope of what the organisation did and was, in many ways, the opposite of their original philosophy of coming in to villages and asking about their needs and desires.

Another project that was being implemented during my initial fieldwork was a State Department sponsored grant for womens' groups, which provided further funds to enhance the capacity of already existing Peace Mother projects. While a seemingly positive funding opportunity, the stipulations for receiving the money were complicated. Each section receiving the funds was required to open a bank account with two females and one male as signatories. However, individuals in rural areas do not use banks because they are suspicious of leaving their money with someone else. In Mayelie, for example, some individuals were concerned about whether or not they could access their money once they had given it to the bank. In addition, Mayelie individuals faced some issues with opening their accounts due to a misunderstanding around some documentation, and a member of the Fambul Tok staff was required to mediate between the bank and the village.

Therefore, Fambul Tok staff all work as intermediaries and translators through different channels. Caulker is well educated, and has, for many years, interacted with both international stakeholders and Sierra Leonean civil society. He spends significant periods of time abroad, speaks and writes fluent English and can speak with both Sierra Leonean villagers as well as international donors with relative ease. The district staff also play a significant translation role by interacting between various actors to facilitate different

programmes. They implement the core Fambul Tok programme in which they vernacularise the global discourses on transitional justice and reconciliation, as well as act as intermediaries between villages where they work and other institutions, such as the banks, to aid village members in navigating unfamiliar terrain. Many of the Fambul Tok staff are also fairly well educated and have worked in the NGO sector for many years. Some of the staff have also travelled abroad and/or have learned from international traineeships in the country. During fieldwork, for example, two key staff working in the Freetown office travelled to Boston and Washington D.C. to receive training, and be representatives for the organisation. Other staff had not necessarily travelled outside the continent, but due to their exposure to different settings in Sierra Leone, were still capable of translation. For example, one male staff member in Bombali, who has worked with the organisation since 2010, had graduated from secondary school and had done some university courses (although had not graduated); however, he has worked in the NGO sector, including with sanitation programmes, education implementation and election monitoring. He went to church every Sunday, was apart of local community groups and was well respected around Makeni. Simultaneously though, he came from a humble background; he grew up in a very small village on the outskirts of Makeni and often emphasised how he enjoyed rustic village life (which did appear evident in our months of travelling through the countryside together); thus, he was someone that, while he had not necessarily travelled abroad or had had a formal education, had been exposed to various development discourses and international development workers. On the other hand, due to his upbringing, he could also relate to villagers, and thus, was perfectly positioned to be a translator, interacting between more senior members of the organisation and rural village members.

Therefore, both the organisation itself and its staff work as intermediaries between many different actors in order to maintain the programme. While Fambul Tok certainly has its own agenda, it also acts as a vessel through which larger international organisations can funnel their programmes, whether it is peaceful election campaigns, human rights initiatives or micro-finance projects. At a monthly staff meeting, Caulker discussed how

having these structures already in place makes it easier for other NGOs to come in and facilitate their own programmes. He reminded the staff that it is necessary to be mindful of "who Fambul Tok is", that, despite its role as a conduit for other organisations, the organisation does have its own identity. These translation roles begin to shed light on some of the various power dynamics occurring between different members of the organisation and participants in Fambul Tok's programmes. All of these individuals constitute the 'local' and have a role in facilitating ownership.

Disaggregating the 'local' and the meaning of ownership within Fambul Tok's Programme

Fambul Tok's discourses frame the organisation as 'local', as opposed to international because the organisation is based within the country's borders and only employs Sierra Leoneans. These discourses also advocate for ceremonies and rituals deriving from Sierra Leonean culture and tradition. Therefore, the organisation's discourses equate the 'local' with the national, as well as culture and tradition. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the organisation is a complex make up of different actors and thus, defining who constitutes the 'local' and who owns these programmes is difficult, because there is not a "single coherent set of local owners" (Donais 2009, 11). There are evident hierarchies and power dynamics occurring between the organisation and its international donors, as the organisation is dependent on funds to maintain itself. In addition, as the chapter has illustrated, the 'local' is a contested category within Sierra Leone. It is also the subject of constantly shifting hierarchies and power dynamics between internationals, the organisation and the communities. As a starting point, the organisation is required to negotiate its position with international actors, which has required it to incorporate smaller activities (such as community dialogues) in order to secure other sources of funding. Thus, power is not equal, but rather shifts to different groups at different times:

> Local ownership is not zero-sum…Fambul Tok tries to have a different concept of resources, they are not all monetary, but you cannot function without some money. It has ebbed and flowed on that account – there are periods more and less successful with local ownership. I personally believe it is connected to funding, the less dependent you are on outside funding, the more flexibility you have. A basic fact of reporting requirements

> from donors is not always suited to the context. It kills energy and initiative and lays bare where the power lies (former board member interview).

In many ways Fambul Tok is at the behest of donors and donor requirements; however, donors also need these organisations to implement their own projects. Local staff depend on the organisation for employment, but the organisation could not function without them. Villagers may be dependent on local staff to ensure they benefit from the programmes, but the organisation is also dependent on individual willingness to participate. Thus, all of these actors have a certain stake in the organisation and their programmes.

It is not only solely the donor-organisation relationship that "lays bare where the power lies". Based on my own observations, there are also evident hierarchies and divisions within the organisation. The director was clearly the 'boss', someone to be both respected and feared. He often kept a distance from his staff, uninvolved in field activities and frequently out of the country. I witnessed multiple occasions of a very friendly man one minute, and very angry or irritated the next. He would also turn up at district headquarters with little to no notice. While this did not affect me personally, it intimidated the staff, often putting them on edge or fearing that his temper may result in their loss of the job (staff turnover was common). As a result, those who 'survived' were frequently quiet when he was around. Upon his arrival at the district headquarters where I worked, the atmosphere completely transformed. While normally a lively crowd, people became quiet and reserved. District staff simply did what they were told, without question. They were constantly subjected to last minute changes, long cross-country journeys and at times complete geographic relocation with little notice or explanation.

Similarly, staff workers differentiated themselves from individuals in villages by always identifying as 'Fambul Tok staff'. As Harri Englund points out, NGO workers are often "taught to think of themselves as separate from the grassroots. Identification with the organisation, rather than with the concerns of the grassroots, [becomes] paramount" (2006, 99). Fambul Tok staff took on similar roles, particularly in formal meeting settings. While the organisation claims to "listen and learn" and "walk with communities", my

observations revealed a different relationship. At initial stakeholder meetings, where only a select number of people participated, staff members, such as the one described above, were very serious, speaking with an authoritative tone about the conflict and what needed to be done for individuals to "overcome their trauma" and reconcile. The meetings are set away from the town centre so as not to be 'disturbed' by other village members. The staff stand in front of villagers, who sit on benches. The scene resembles a classroom where Fambul Tok were the 'teachers' and villagers were 'students'. At no point during these meetings did staff ask individuals to discuss their war-related experiences and subsequent impacts.

Notably too, sessions were often conducted in Krio, the *lingua franca*, while the content was often translated by a staff member or someone from the village into the local dialect. Speaking "real Krio" was a status symbol that distinguished staff members from their village counterparts. Gerhard Anders (2012) also noted similar findings in relation to Special Court outreach programmes, wherein the outreach officer speaks Krio while a chief translates and, like Fambul Tok, his presentations were part of an established script about the Court. The fact that these observations are so similar indicates, as Englund suggests, a particular continuity of the manner in which NGO officers present themselves as a means of differentiating their status from that of the villagers.

Sessions begin by setting the 'rules': no side talk, turn mobile phones off, raise your hands, go quietly if you need to leave and be an 'active listener'. Staff then do an activity with a poster, where they invite individuals to come and look and explain what they see and then have a discussion about it. The poster has a map of Sierra Leone with various scenes of both war and peace.

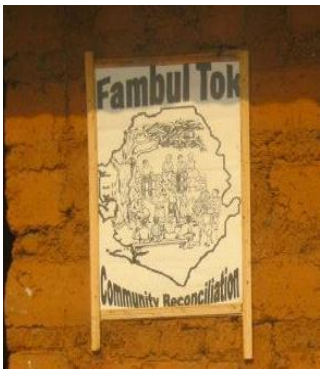


Figure 1.4 Fambul Tok Poster, Personal Photo

However, as Englund points out, staff are "trained to elicit 'right answers' from the audiences…making "participation" an appalling misnomer" (2006, 103). Villagers at the meeting, of whom have minimal education, are quizzed on what they saw. In one meeting I observed, many participants pointed to the tangible objects in the photo, such as the people, flowers and chairs. The male staff member (discussed above) requested they look for other things and then proceeded to ask women to sit in different spots because they were talking too much. In this particular setting, he was a teacher, or authority figure who was doing his duty as an NGO worker, and educator. Conversely, while this select group of villagers were frequently leaders in the community, such as chiefs, teachers, religious figures and mammy queens, they were, in this context, the subjects of lessons. There was an implication that a certain etiquette and behaviour was expected of them, much like how a teacher would speak to a pupil.

After this activity, the premise and programme (as described above) were discussed and just as staff members explained how the conflict occurred and why, they then went on to discuss the emphasis on ownership of the process. Villagers would be responsible for planning the bonfire and getting contributions for the meal. At the end of the meeting, the staff asked whether these select village members, who were apparently speaking on behalf of their villages, would like to participate. At each meeting I witnessed, everyone immediately nodded in agreement. This process does not at all reflect the ownership described in Fambul Tok's media, but rather a 'buy in'.

The people who attend the initial meetings do, however, often receive 'positions' as part of the Fambul Tok community structure. They are either on the Outreach Committee – a committee that lets surrounding villages know about the bonfire – or the Reconciliation Committee, which is responsible for handling any quarrels that arise as a result of the

bonfire. As community leaders, they also had important role to play in spreading the message of the organisation to other villagers, and simultaneously illustrating their graciousness that the organisation had come to *their* community. The chief frequently made a speech in each meeting to publicly thank them for their presence and the opportunity to participate in the programme (discussed further in chapter 5). Therefore, these individuals also played multiple roles and were simultaneously a part of and differentiated from other villagers. Their roles within Fambul Tok created new boundaries and hierarchies within village structures, even if only temporarily. They would often receive T-shirts that symbolically designated them as part of the Fambul Tok structure.

These observations illustrate how 'local' cannot simply be equated with Sierra Leonean and certainly cannot be conflated with particular notions of culture and tradition. Rather, the 'local' is a complex make up of individuals who come to constitute different roles in different contexts. Caulker has a substantial capacity to communicate and negotiate with international donors in an effort to make money, but is simultaneously at the mercy of donors in order to maintain his status. District staff are subject to Caulker's requests but in villages, they identify as part of the NGO apparatus – a symbol of power and status in Sierra Leone. Villagers also obtain particular statuses by participating in Fambul Tok's programme, but these are the same people who are subject to Fambul Tok's lessons about how the conflict occurred, which most individuals present had experienced. The villagers are simply asked whether or not they accept the programme. These procedures demonstrate how ownership does not mean that individuals have the opportunity to design and implement their own programme; rather, the programme is presented to participants and they agree, or 'buy in' to it. However, as illustrated in the next chapter, individuals do ultimately appropriate, or own, certain aspects of the programme, just not the components highlighted in the organisation's media. Therefore, neither 'local' nor 'ownership' are zero-sum, these concepts are both fluid and changing based on the context in which they are being applied.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed how Fambul Tok's discourses and media project particular notions of the 'local', and contrasts it with how different Sierra Leoneans within Fambul Tok interact with one another in the actual practice and implementation of the programme, as well as how some individual staff act as translators for villagers. All of these people make up the 'local'. However, this analysis reveals that the 'local' does not necessarily have the same referent at any given time. In fact, the 'local' is made up of *individuals* whose capacity and power shifts based on context, a notion further explored in the next chapter. Due to the diverse interactions and engagements of individuals, the focus of the programme should not be on whether or not it is effective, or achieving the goals within the framework discussed in their media project; rather, the 'local' should be viewed through the lens of 'activity', in order to account for the fluid, dynamic and changing roles of individuals in different contexts. The next chapter provides a more in-depth analysis of how Fambul Tok's programmes become appropriated, or owned, by different individuals, and what this says more substantively about understanding the 'local' and ownership.

Chapter 5: '*Wae Peace dae, Development go kam'*[26]: Interpretations and Appropriation of Fambul Tok's Programmes

Introduction

While the previous chapter analysed Fambul Tok's discourses and organisational structure, this chapter looks at participant perspectives of Fambul Tok's programme. While other literature on local transitional justice has examined the impact and effectiveness of designated 'local' programmes against their own goals and discourses, this chapter will look at the actual activity of individual participants. I will argue that individuals are not simply 'passive' receptors, but active agents in shaping the programme. They capitalise on certain aspects, while co-opting others, ultimately interpreting and moulding the programme to best fit their own needs.

In addition, individuals themselves are the subjects of embedded societal structures, which ultimately influence how these people interact with the programme. While informants were of course diverse, there were some overarching commonalities. All interviewees lived in rural areas that were at least an hour from Makeni. All informants had strong religious beliefs, either Christian or Muslim; most worked in agriculture and did not have much formal education. Interviewees did, however, have various types of status within their respective communities. These factors serve to explain how and why people appropriated certain aspects and interpreted the programme in the manner that they did.

Prior to exploring some of the ways in which Fambul Tok programmes were appropriated though, it is first necessary to examine how people interpreted the organisation's discourse in order to explain why they agreed to participate. While the organisation does not have any religious affiliation, people interpreted their narratives through this lens, demonstrating that existing social structures and beliefs determine how NGO programmes and narratives are understood. In addition, the organisation becomes the subject of local

[26] Where there is peace, development will come

political issues. In Makulon section, for example, Fambul Tok's presence exacerbated an already existing conflict between two villages: Makulon and Gbintimaria. The organisation also provided an extra-ordinary space for the villages to come together, enabling some people to overcome certain prejudices in relation to this conflict and begin to reconcile. The conflict was, however, in relation to chieftaincy issues, not the war. Therefore, Fambul Tok does not necessarily determine how the programme will manifest and the ways in which individuals will engage with it; rather, it is the organisation that is subject to interpretation, politicisation and appropriation.

However, I place particular focus on the Makulon-Gbintimaria case to demonstrate how individuals appropriated the programme for their own objectives, with references from other areas, like Makomray and Benia sections as well. The chapter also illustrates how the events leading up to and surrounding the bonfire ceremony were more important than the actual ceremony itself. The components of the ceremony that were intended to be cathartic and healing, such as the confessions, appeared performative and were subject to diverse interpretations by different participants. I then examine how participants interpreted and capitalised upon certain programme components that resulted in longer-term transformations. Contextual factors – such as structural components, time, location and war-related experiences – are also discussed to more precisely analyse individual agency and how this results in the appropriation of Fambul Tok's programmes.

Religious Interpretations of Fambul Tok

As discussed in the previous chapter, Fambul Tok staff went to villages with a particular narrative about the conflict, framing the actions of village members as both the cause and the solution. These narratives were fairly uniform in each village I observed. The programme structure – namely the initial meetings, the bonfire ceremony and the follow up activities – were also relatively similar in each village. For individual Sierra Leoneans though, the programme is understood through the lens of their own social and political beliefs.

The organisation could not divorce itself (nor did it necessarily want to) from the pre-existing beliefs and experiences of participants. Rather, Fambul Tok was part of much broader social and post-conflict transition processes that had, prior to the organisation's presence, already been taking place. Villagers had been hearing messages from through various mediums that encouraged peace and reconciliation. Government officials had disseminated messages through radio while NGOs that had gone to villages to provide supplies also relayed messages of peace. However, the most consistent and pervasive institutions to convey these messages were churches and mosques. Religious institutions often play critical roles in individual lives and belief systems in Sierra Leone, as in many other parts of Africa. As Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar argue, these religious epistemologies are critical to understanding how Africans think about and acquire knowledge about the world. If scholars and practitioners are to understand African perspectives, these views should be taken seriously (2007, 386). While I do not necessarily agree with the essentialisation of all Africans as religious, the overall point that scholars should take religious rationales seriously is valid and particularly relevant to Sierra Leone. Religion and faith are critical parts of everyday life for Sierra Leoneans. Such beliefs are not solely confined to their respective institutions, but rather, as the below evidence will illustrate, these beliefs are part and parcel of how people interpret their surroundings. This is demonstrated by the fact that religious institutions are widely credited with playing an instrumental role in aiding Sierra Leoneans during and just after the conflict (Hurd 2016). They often encouraged people to 'forgive and forget' about their war-related experiences (see chapter 6 for further analysis).

Understanding these religious epistemologies also aids in understanding how villagers interpreted Fambul Tok. The messages Fambul Tok delivered frequently mirrored earlier messages from religious institutions. As a result, some people frequently interpreted the organisation and its messages through a religious lens. In Gbintimaria, for example, most villagers are Muslim and their faith played an important role in how the organisation's narratives were interpreted. In speaking to an elderly Muslim man he stated that "[Fambul

Tok] brought a message to forgive and forget. I believe in this message because God says if someone does wrong you should forgive and forget" (interview with SK*b*, Gbintimaria 2014). The Imam from Gbintimaria, who was a prominent leader in the area, affirmed this point: "They trust what [Fambul Tok] are saying because they take it as gospel. The messages are righteous. I was saying these messages before but because another body stated the same message, people take it even more seriously" (interview with AARK, Gbintimaria 2014). The messages of peace and forgiveness that Fambul Tok advocated were a reaffirmation of messages that had been preached in Gbintimaria's mosque. Therefore, while Fambul Tok was not a religious organisation, they were perceived by some to be a religious messenger.

Some Participants explicitly stated that the messages from Fambul Tok connected to what they had heard in their church or mosque. However, this religious connection was often very subtly articulated. Informants would refer to Fambul Tok messages as the 'truth.' For instance, the town chief of Mayelie, who was a Christian, explained that:

> [Fambul Tok] was preaching the truth and the truth is to forgive…This is what the Pastors/Imams are saying. God sent them to come and leave this message for us. The truth is when somebody does bad, you should forgive but when 2, 3, 4 people say it you have to forgive…We have no power to revenge so we know Fambul Tok is right (interview with ST*a*, Mayelie 2014).

This particular reference to the 'truth' presents it as supreme and absolute. It is not a 'truth' that can be debated nor is it open to interpretation. God's truth is *the* truth and accordingly, if one is a good Christian or Muslim, one must heed and enact this truth. There is also an emphasis on the repetition of these messages. If so many people are saying the same thing, then it must be a truth derived from a higher power. Thus, by Fambul Tok advocating forgiveness in similar language to that employed in religious institutions, they were understood to be 'truthful' and 'honest,' an organisation that aligned with the beliefs of village members and who spoke in a language with which many people were comfortable and familiar.

Speaking in this particular religious dialect also evidenced to villagers that the staff themselves were religious. As Gbintimaria's Imam further explained: "People believe them because the people who work for [Fambul Tok] are also religious so they trust them" (interview with AARK, Gbintimaria 2014). The fact that Fambul Tok staff were able to frame forgiveness and reconciliation discourses through religious narratives was important to village members. This language signalled that staff had shared common values. Conversely too, staff were able to convey themselves as religious by speaking the same spiritual language as villagers. This commonality aided in building a relationship between individual villagers and members of the organisation.

As a result of these factors, many villagers came to the conclusion that Fambul Tok was a religious medium through which divine messages were being delivered. Another vivid statement I often heard was that "if someone comes from far away, you must listen". Initially, I thought distance referred to the geographic location of Makeni, until I spoke to an elderly retired teacher in Mayelie, who explained that if someone says they "come from far away, it's God because God sends that person and you have to listen to them." He went on to reiterate that, "People take [the messages] spiritually because they were similar to messages we heard in the Church and Mosque" (interview with TT, Mayelie 2014). Thus, 'far away' was not a physical or geographic reference, but a reference to divine intervention. As a local government official from Makomray explained: "Fambul Tok is the bridge between God and the community. We believe their intervention came from God and that is why we accept it" (interview with JF, Makomray 2014). Thus, participation with the organisation's programme was, for some individuals, premised on this religious connection. Villagers interpreted the organisation as a physical embodiment of the divine.

Illustrating how the organisation was interpreted demonstrates just how critical it is to understand the social structures embedded in villages themselves. As Ellis and ter Haar state: "Most Africans…understand and interpret the world partly through the prism of religion. In other words, religion, whatever else it may be, is a mode of apprehending

reality" (2007, 387). While Fambul Tok does not have any official religious affiliation, almost all Sierra Leoneans are religious in some form. Thus, the individuals of Fambul Tok's staff, as well as their participants find a common language in the religious realm. Thus, pre-existing knowledge and beliefs of Sierra Leoneans, including staff and individual participants, are critical to understand because it serves to explain how and why narratives are interpreted in particular ways.

Witnessing some of the initial meetings between elderly village stakeholders and Fambul Tok staff provided further insight into this religious interpretation of Fambul Tok. Sitting through their presentations I often felt as though I was sitting in a religious institution. The setting was frequently in a quiet place removed from the village where disruptions would not occur. Any meeting began with both a Christian and Muslim prayer.[27] Fambul Tok staff charismatically engaged their audience by emphatically gesturing to affirm certain points, much like an enthusiastic Imam or Pastor would do. The audience would nod and make affirming sounds indicating their agreement with these narratives. Therefore, it was not only the narratives, but also the setting and delivery of the presentation that elicited a certain familiarity of a church or mosque for audiences.

In addition, Fambul Tok's narratives had very moral undertones, much like a religious text. For example, the staff would discuss how notions such as disunity, selfishness, disrespect, injustice and anger had caused the war. Furthermore, the war had perpetuated 'bad culture' in the contemporary period and resulted in immoral behaviour, such as girls dressing inappropriately, greedy youth and members of secret societies ignoring the rules. Fambul Tok staff suggested these issues were continuing because some Sierra Leoneans are no longer *Godfearing*. When I inquired about a definition for this, a Fambul Tok staff member stated: "If you fear God, this fear leads to good behaviour. This respect is important to society." Godfearing is a good and necessary quality for any religious individual in Sierra Leone. It is a way of ensuring that people, particularly youth, are

[27] This is, however, common in any sector throughout Sierra Leone.

obedient and a village or community remains unified. According to Fambul Tok, if people do not put a stop to this bad culture, this will be "a recipe for further violence" (Stakeholder's Meeting).

The organisation framed issues related to the conflict and the current day in the context of good versus bad culture, thereby engaging a moral discourse similar to that heard in religious settings. By eliciting this narrative about 'right' and 'wrong,' staff members were speaking a language of values and morality that village members understood as familiar and meaningful. Staff used phrases and analogies that demonstrated to participants that they were part of the same moral fabric and the same *Fambul* (family). Ultimately, these discourses, or truths, served as a concrete basis upon which staff members were able to establish authority with village members and motivate them to participate in the programme.

These examples illustrate how participants interpreted the organisation's narratives through a religious lens. While Fambul Tok does not advertise itself as a religious NGO, its messages were understood through this particular prism, illustrating the relevance of understanding the societal structures within which these exchanges occur and the individuals that both make up the organisation and the villages where they work. Organisations cannot separate their programmes or discourses from pre-existing knowledge, beliefs or experiences of their staff or participants. Rather, these should be explored in more depth. As pointed out by the Imam in Gbintimaria and the town chief in Mayelie, similar narratives had been espoused in mosques and churches in years prior to Fambul Tok's presence and as a result, had led participants to deduce that this was in fact a divine intervention. Whether or not Fambul Tok had intended to be interpreted through this lens is not entirely clear; however, it was evident that religion was a means through which staff could establish links to villagers and illustrate that they were not all that different, but held the same social values. Religion "is a symbolic language…it reflects and communicates people's ideas about the world they live in" (Ellis and ter Haar 2007, 388). Many Sierra Leoneans do not divorce their moral and spiritual worlds; they

are considered one and the same. This is precisely why an engagement with individuals is critical. The organisation is itself made up of individuals, as are the villages and religion is a critical means through which they are able to connect and communicate. NGOs, such as Fambul Tok, are not the starting point of their own process, but rather they are part of broader social processes and subject to interpretations based on pre-existing beliefs and experiences of individual staff and villagers in the areas they work.

Politicisation of Fambul Tok

Fambul Tok has no formal relationship to state or political structures. Staff were frequently adamant about their apolitical position, often preventing politicians from using their platform to campaign. When Fambul Tok values were outlined at stakeholder meetings and trainings, the first point emphasised was the organisation's neutral position with regards to politics; they were neither APC or SLPP-affiliated (this was often met by cheers from village members). Participants appeared to welcome an organisation with no particular political agenda.

In addition, the organisation's blue logo was consciously chosen so that it would not be seen as an affiliate of either the APC red nor the SLPP green. Staff members and any representative were always conscious not to wear politically symbolic colours (even red or green motorbike helmets). Villagers on the Fambul Tok committees would be asked to change their clothes if they were wearing a politically affiliated colour in order to avoid rumours and misinterpretation by other village members. Thus, the organisation goes to great lengths to ensure it remains viewed as apolitical. This again illustrates how pre-existing political structures influence how individual staff would act, and purposely avoid dressing in particular colours, in these contexts.

While Fambul Tok attempts (and generally succeeds) in maintaining a distance from national politics, it is consistently subject to chieftaincy politics. Rebekka Friedman (2015) argues that the organisation's close ties to chieftaincy structures may risk

strengthening and reproducing the very chieftaincy system that fuelled the conflict. As mentioned in the introduction, most NGOs operating in rural areas will, at some point during their programme, require the approval of chieftaincy structures to obtain access, so whether Fambul Tok is any more or less responsible for restoring chieftaincy structure more than other organisations or institutions in rural areas is certainly debatable. In fact, as I will demonstrate a bit later, there is evidence to suggest that the organisation's messages are actually *detracting* from chieftaincy power. What I focus on in the next few sections is the fact that, regardless of whether or not the organisation *intends* to be involved in politics, it is virtually impossible to circumvent entirely. As emphasised above, Fambul Tok does not 'begin fresh' but rather is absorbed into individual and village issues and so, regardless of its intention, the organisation is inevitably subject to politicisation. The politics between Gbintimaria and Makulon villages is a perfect example of how an apolitical organisation can quickly become the subject of village politics.

Background of the Chieftaincy Conflict between Gbintimaria and Makulon

While chieftaincy structures were, as discussed in chapter three, one of the primary reasons for rural grievances, they continue to remain "a key source of authority and frequently the only visible element of government" (Jackson 2007, 95). As Richard Fanthorpe also argues, chiefs are preferable to politicians: "[F]or the poor, securing political leaders that remain downwardly accountable is an absolute priority" (2005, 45). Therefore, the politics relating to chieftaincy issues are often far more important to rural citizens than national or district politics because they have a greater prevalence in everyday life.

Gbintimaria and Makulon had been in conflict for four years prior to the organisation's presence, due to a heated issue about the section chief. In this particular section, the chieftaincy rotated between four families, and when the previous chief had died in 2011,

the Bangura[28] family was next in line. The previous chief had been in Makulon and because it is an amalgamated section, the chieftaincy is supposed to rotate between Makulon and Gbintimaria. Makulon, however, stated that it was a rotation of four families, three of whom resided in Makulon and one in Gbintimaria. The eldest of the Bangura family who was supposed to become the next chief had passed away and so his son, Ibrahim Bangura, wanted to run as a symbol of his father's legacy. However, elders from Gbintimaria had chosen Pa Abu Bangura III as the Bangura from Gbintimaria to be the next section chief, as he was much older and was from Gbintimaria. However, Makulon village stood behind the young Ibrahim Bangura, ultimately causing significant conflict between the two villages. It was initially decided that Abu did have a right to be chief but the people of Gbintimaria protested.

The decision was appealed in a local court and the judge then determined that Abu should be allocated land in Makulon, but that the chieftaincy belonged in Gbintimaria. Makulon then protested and it was ultimately decided by the Paramount Chief of Gbanti Kamaranka that there would be a section-wide election overseen by the National Electoral Commission (NEC), at which point Pa Abu Bangura from Gbintimaria won. However, due to the fact that Makulon villagers had already taken an oath to Ibrahim, they were unable to recognise Abu Bangura as their section chief. In order to remove these oaths, it would cost approximately Le 2,000,000 ($500) and according to village members, Ibrahim had no intention of doing that. The Deputy Chairman of Bombali District is from Gbintimaria and after he was elected, he attempted to mediate this issue between the two villages, but it was apparently unsuccessful.

This chieftaincy issue caused significant tension and changes in the relationships between inhabitants of the two villages. One man stated that after these issues he stopped going to church in Makulon and now goes an extra few miles to Kamaranka because he is afraid of some certain people in Makulon. He also told a story of a Gbintimaria woman who

[28] Names have been changed for the purposes of maintaining anonymity of the individuals involved.

was married to a man in Makulon and was threatened by elders with *Waite*[29] when she attempted to verbally defend her village. In addition, the two villages used to share land and that was no longer occurring (interview with WK, Gbintimaria). Thus, this chieftaincy business (as it was commonly called) was continuing to significantly impact social and economic interaction between these villages. People from both Makulon and Gbintimaria were very weary about going to, or even passing through the opposing village because of the tension and threats. Fambul Tok quickly became embroiled in these issues – issues that were highly political and part of everyday life for people in this section, but had nothing to do with the war.

Fambul Tok and Chieftaincy Politics

When Fambul Tok staff arrived in Makulon section, they had already planned for the stakeholder's meeting to be in Gbintimaria. When staff called out for attendance, only one representative from Makulon was present (generally the town head and the Mammy Queen or chairlady[30] from each village in the section would attend). The person present was the Pastor who did not attend on behalf of the village but rather as a Christian representative. It did not appear particularly noteworthy to anyone present at the time, but by holding the initial meetings, as well as the bonfire, in Gbintimaria, the staff, unbeknownst to them, were politicising what was supposed to be an apolitical affair.

Upon learning that Makulon was not going to participate in the programme, two members of Fambul Tok staff went to the village and met with town stakeholders, including elders involved in the chieftaincy issues as well as a schoolteacher[31] and the pastor. Makulon was under the impression that the programme was just for a small group, not for entire villages. At the meeting, they were initially quite reluctant to participate because all the

[29] A term referencing witchcraft that roughly translates to 'watch yourself, you do not know what will happen to you.'
[30] A communally elected female representative. Each town has a chairlady and each section has a Mammy Queen.
[31] Teachers in rural communities are very well respected individuals who are often expected to do many other duties beyond teaching.

initial meetings had taken place in Gbintimaria. Makulon elders made it clear that they would not participate in anything related to chieftaincy issues. Both Fambul Tok staff members explained that they did not have a preference for one village over the other, nor had they intended to get involved in the chieftaincy issues. Over the course of this discussion, the elders continued to mention that staff members were sleeping in Gbintimaria, which was symbolic of a particular allegiance to the village. In order to demonstrate that the organisation did not in fact have an allegiance to one particular village, a staff member and I agreed to eat with them and stay in their village for a night. In doing this, the organisation was attempting to act as a mediator between two villages.

In preparation for the bonfire, there is a village sensitisation meeting wherein the material and monetary contributions from each village in the section are counted. These contributions are one means by which the organisation facilitates ownership. At this meeting the next morning, a handful of people, including the teacher and the son of the town chief from Makulon came to deliver contributions and participate in the discussion about the upcoming bonfire. Along with other villages in the section, Makulon donated both rice and Leones as a communal contribution. This act was symbolic of their willingness to work alongside and even within a village they frequently avoided.

Individuals from Gbintimaria also appeared very welcoming. In his opening remarks at the beginning of the meeting, the disputed section chief thanked everyone for coming, but particularly welcomed the individuals of Makulon. As a sign of their willingness to work with Makulon, the elders of Gbintimaria agreed to allow the son of the Makulon town chief to go to Makeni to do the shopping for the bonfire, an opportunity many villagers would have liked to seize. These gestures were meaningful articulations of respect and appreciation between Gbintimaria and Makulon individuals. Thus, Fambul Tok both directly and indirectly created a space that provided prominent members of these respective villages an opportunity to work together and demonstrate good will towards one another. People from both Makulon and Gbintimaria, both publicly and privately, continuously thanked the organisation for its presence and willingness to work between

the two villages. The teacher from Makulon kept repeating to me how good it was that Fambul Tok had come because it was the first time the villages had agreed to cooperate for the section. As he said to me at this meeting: "You have made no mistake to come to this place, we are vulnerable to a lot of problems."

However, in so doing the organisation inevitably became part and parcel of local chieftaincy politics. This scenario further demonstrates how neither the organisation nor the staff are divorced from social and political structures. Rather, these interactions between staff and the various participants ultimately enact what becomes *the programme*. Over the course of this process, the organisation's narratives and individual staff actually interweave themselves into the already existing social and economic structures within which the participants live.

The Fambul Tok Approach in Context

Many rural areas have been engaging more substantially with different NGOs since the end of the conflict. As a result of their previous experiences, they have developed opinions and impressions of these organisations. Prior to one Fambul Tok stakeholder's meeting, a man was moving chairs and benches. He arranged the benches to sit in front of two trees. Between the trees were four chairs for staff members and myself. A staff member quickly went over and said, "We do not need these chairs. None of this executive business." The fact that the villager was arranging chairs in a particular way demonstrated how villagers had pre-existing expectations about the staff and the programme based on experiences with other NGOs.

In conversations with village members, it became abundantly clear that people were disillusioned with NGO approaches and, in their initial encounter, perceived Fambul Tok as yet just another one who would come, speak to them and leave. At a stakeholder's meeting, for example, one woman asked if the organisation was going to tell them not to circumcise females (a highly contentious issue between international organisations and

rural Sierra Leonean areas). A staff member simply responded by saying they did not have a particular stance on it and the conversation moved on. However, the comment struck me as significant; some people had anticipated being lectured about changing their values and goals, thereby demonstrating how previous NGO encounters had moulded their expectations of Fambul Tok.

Sierra Leonean and international organisations frequently came to villages for short periods of time and had already established what they would be providing for them, rarely inquiring about specific village needs and goals. One example of this I often saw was an EU-sponsored project that had built community centres. These 'centres' were blocks of concrete with a sign saying 'community centre', often in the middle of the village. Yet, I often saw them empty. This example is emblematic of disconnections between NGOs and village goals and priorities. Fambul Tok did, however, take a more engaged approach in which they attempted to spend time with, and live alongside, village members.

The 'Fambul Tok approach' was a phrase I often heard both in the organisation as well as in villages. The organisation prides itself on this unique way of working with villages. As has been mentioned, one of their core values is that they "walk with communities to find their own answers". In order to work with them, staff familiarised themselves with village politics and dynamics, such as the conflict discussed above. In addition, they spent a significant period of time with participants, often staying in villages for days prior to the bonfire or during the trainings. Gbintimaria, for example, had had many different NGO representatives come to assist with a wide range of issues, from farming to women's health. These people frequently came for a short period and left shortly thereafter. Therefore, it was not just the fact that the staff had become involved in the chieftaincy conflict. It was also these subtle acts that were meaningful. One woman said to me that: "We trust them because they are closer to us, they ate with us. They spent time here. It created trust" (interview with MB*b*, Gbintimaria 2014). Her husband reiterated this point in a separate discussion: "Their approach was good, they stayed here, ate our food, it is very unique" (interview with WK, Gbintimaria 2014). The fact that individual staff

members had taken the time to stay overnight in villages, eat amongst village members and engaged in informal conversations with them demonstrated a unique respect and interest in the village that created more trust between individuals and staff members.

Another example of this sort of informal interaction occurred in Makomray. One staff member (described in the previous chapter), would often spend time drinking *poyo* with villagers. In this particular space he was not asserting any type of authority, but was simply one person speaking to another about everyday happenings. One evening in Makomray, we set out in search of *poyo*. We ultimately found a group of men. The staff member introduced himself and me and we began talking. He spent a lot of time speaking to one man in particular. They spoke at length about the man's family matters and about some of the current issues in national politics. The staff member spoke mostly in Krio, but also listened in Temne (of which he understood but could not speak). In this setting he was not necessarily a staff member, but just another Sierra Leonean. This scene re-emphasises why individual interactions are important to explore; so often discourses on NGOs speak about these organisations as homogenous entities when in fact they are made up of individuals who interact with the programme participants *individually*. Such activities are what actually establish the relationship between the organisation and its participants.

Another point many informants mentioned was that the organisation did not make any promises. The disputed section chief discussed this point. He stated: "They did not make false promises like other NGOs, they didn't promise us anything, they just supported us…they built trust with us" (interview with AD, Gbintimaria 2014). This quotation illustrates two points. First, by *not* making promises, some people were willing to place more trust in Fambul Tok, which was viewed as honest and respectful. Second, this exemplifies the general disillusionment and distrust with NGOs, which was, based on previous experiences, not unfounded. In Salthenien village (a village close to Gbintimaria where I observed some preliminary meetings), there was an NGO sponsored by Hugo Chavez that had deceived many villages, including Salthenien, into giving money and they

never saw the NGO workers (or their money) again. A Fambul Tok staff member later investigated only to find out these areas had been scammed. Due to the proximity of this village to Gbintimaria, individuals from both villages shopped and sold in the same market setting. This story was being told to people from different villages as a cautionary tale. This exemplifies how Fambul Tok was viewed in relation to previous experiences and stories, and so staff attempted to more personally engage with village members in order to set themselves apart from other organisations and programmes.

The Bonfire Ceremony

While the bonfire ceremony appeared to be the 'main event' in much of the organisation's media, my research illustrates how it was actually the activities surrounding it that were more intriguing, particularly individual appropriation of certain components over the course of the programme. According to the organisation, the bonfire is supposed to be a symbolically safe space for people to discuss their war-related experiences. Individuals can point fingers at others who have wronged them and can then forgive (or in the case of the accused, ask for forgiveness) and ultimately reconcile inter-personal relationships that may have been severed. While these confessions at the bonfire ceremony are presented in Fambul Tok's media as the most central component of the programme, in reality they constitute just one, relatively short, part of the evening. In addition, it is this component that elicited the most criticism from participants, who had mixed feelings about discussing and hearing about the war twelve years after its official conclusion. Rather, the events surrounding the bonfire, including the preparation, eating, dancing and the ceremony the next morning were far more meaningful to participants, and, in the Makulon-Gbintimaria case, these peripheral events better facilitated reconciliation than the direct discussion about the war. However, the bonfire ceremony played a conciliatory role in relation to contemporary issues, as opposed to war-related ones, for reasons I will examine below. This portion of the chapter will illustrate how individuals appropriate, and thus, *own* the programme based on their needs and priorities. I will use the events surrounding the Gbintimaria bonfire ceremony to illustrate these points.

In the day leading up to the bonfire, villagers engaged in their usual routines. Children and teachers went to school and adults tended to their farms or flocks. There was little sign of anything new or significant occurring. It was not until the afternoon when wood began to pile up and women from other villages began arriving to help cook, that the bonfire ceremony became more visible.

During the cooking prior to the bonfire, the women were in particularly good spirits and it did create a very happy and harmonious atmosphere. Many women from different villages in the section came to help with the cooking. More specifically, the Mammy Queen, who was from Makulon, and one of the chairladies from Gbintimaria were particularly friendly toward one another, laughing and joking in Temne and helping each other with preparation tasks. More generally, women gossiped and chatted about their children and families. At certain points during the preparation they would begin dancing. At one point, a woman from an adjacent village started to beat a canister to make music while others were cooking, providing a lively atmosphere unique to that particular evening. These women are not often able to see one another and so the bonfire did provide an opportunity for some people to socialise with friends from surrounding villages and provided a space for the women from Makulon and Gbintimaria to come together and work toward a common goal.

It should also be noted that some of the planning for the bonfire actually created conflict between individuals. In Gbintimaria, there were two minor conflicts. One was in reference to where the cooking should be done. Because it is an amalgamated village, there are two chairladies, both of whom wanted to do the cooking in their portion of the village. Eventually, it was mediated by Fambul Tok staff and elders. It was agreed that they would do it on the boundary between the two villages.

And then there was the 'goat issue.' At the sensitisation meeting in Gbintimaria, the elders had contributed a down payment of Le 80,000 to one man for his goat (needed as part of

the sacrifice for the ceremonial component). This man, who was a town headman in a different area and was not well known to members of the host village, took this money, sold his big goat (for a hefty profit) and then proceeded to bring a much smaller goat to the bonfire ceremony. It was a topic of discussion amongst staff members, elders and women who were cooking all afternoon. The elders, who are expected to act as representatives of the village and work alongside staff members, were so embarrassed by this incident they ended up buying another goat to sacrifice. This was a minor, yet significant, example of how one participant saw this scenario as a means to individually profit from the organisation's programme.

In addition, the initial meetings may have, in a few cases, caused jealousy amongst those who were not selected. This was noted by a female farmer in Gbintimaria, that only "a few were chosen", eliciting certain suspicions between individuals and pointing to the fact that some individuals interacted more with staff members than others did. Therefore, while the activities surrounding the bonfire could be uniting (particularly for women), some aspects caused rifts between individuals.

These examples demonstrate how the organisation's programme is subject to and shaped by existing social and individual dynamics, highlighting a few key points. First, the latter two examples show some of the intra-communal dynamics at play. Elders are privileged in the sense that they are among the select few who attend the initial meetings and key decision makers and thus, when the organisation seeks permission to enact their programme, these are individuals who agree on behalf of the rest of the section. Simultaneously though, they act as representatives and if, in the instance of the goat, something happens, the elders will pay (in this case literally) to ensure the programme goes according to plan. Second, with reference to the 'goat issue,' this man is the subject of trying economic circumstances. According to UNDP, 60% of Sierra Leoneans live below the poverty line and of these 80% live in rural areas.[32] Many people often struggle

[32] For more information see: http://www.sl.undp.org/ and http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/rural-poverty-portal/country/home/tags/sierra_leone

to make ends meet; however, as discussed in chapter three and the next chapter, they are also creative and ultimately find ways of managing their circumstances. This person saw this as an opportunity to profit, rather than a time to reconcile. These interactions illustrate how the event was not solely conciliatory, but rather served as a platform for creating new conflicts as well as magnifying protracted personal issues and challenging economic circumstances. The organisation, thus, becomes intertwined in the social and political worlds in the villages where they work.

As darkness loomed and villagers finished their meals, they slowly began to converge at the site where the bonfire was held. The bonfire itself is an interesting subject of symbolism in Sierra Leonean culture, although not necessarily in reference to reconciliation. John Caulker discusses how the bonfire evokes childhood memories of togetherness and the culture of storytelling, how people would sit around the fire and discuss the day's events (Fambul Tok DVD). When I inquired about the significance of a bonfire though, it was not necessarily ritualistic. A few informants mentioned how elders sometimes sit with children telling them stories or legends of their ancestors around a fire, and that the fire had multiple meanings in everyday life (see below). However, as one informant stated, "the bonfire itself is not symbolic, it merely provides light" (interview with JSC, Makulon 2014). These notions of authenticity and tradition resonate with other scholarly work on local transitional justice ceremonies, Branch (2011) and Allen (2007) argue that traditional Northern Ugandan ceremonies, such as Mato Oput, were in fact romantically re-framed to act as a reconciliation mechanism in a post-conflict context. Scholars on Rwanda (Reyntjens and Vandeginste 2005; Oomen 2005; Waldorf 2010) similarly discuss how Gacaca was re-designed as a mechanism to enact post-conflict justice. In so doing, these 'traditional' mechanisms were re-invented as romanticised spectacles to address issues outside the scope for which they were originally designed. The 'invention' of the bonfire ceremony is similar. Like Mato Oput and Gacaca, the bonfire has some origins in Sierra Leone, namely bringing people together and the idea of storytelling, but it does not necessarily relate to confessions or conflict. Therefore, the bonfire was re-created as a spectacle by the organisation.

However, a fire has many uses and meanings in everyday rural Sierra Leone. It is the main mechanism for staying warm during harmattan (the colder part of the year). A fire is used to cook, so it is emblematic of nourishment and sustenance. In addition, a fire is the primary means of waste management. It can also be understood as religiously symbolic (i.e. the burning bush). Therefore, the bonfire can be associated with storytelling, warmth and comfort, nourishment, the incineration of unneeded goods and spirituality. This demonstrates that while the bonfire is not directly symbolic of a particular tradition of reconciliation, the fire does penetrate and sustain everyday life in Sierra Leone and is, therefore, significant, just not as the organisation has framed it.

One might think that the bonfire ceremony would create a serene atmosphere of people sitting quietly while others tell stories. Sometimes this was the case: I was once travelling on a motorbike through a rural area in Tonkolili at dusk when I saw an elder man sitting with some children; some were gathering firewood while others were intently listening to stories. This bonfire appeared to be an idyllic space where an elder was conveying legends of their heritage in a very intimate setting.

The Fambul Tok bonfire ceremonies were quite the opposite. They were often loud and busy with a lot happening. In the afternoon leading up to the bonfire, the staff went through surrounding villages with a megaphone to get people's attention and remind them to attend. At every bonfire I attended, elders and children were the first to come and others would follow. Gbintimaria was no exception. There were many loud conversations. People were coming and going. Many youth were, at least initially, engaged in other activities. In Gbintimaria, they were playing films and charging phones directly across from where the bonfire was located. Just prior to the programme commencing, a young boy ran and did a flip over the bonfire. The scene was anything but quiet and composed, the opposite of what one might think a conciliatory atmosphere would be.

The staff used the megaphone to call people's attention and the programme began with prayers, at which point people quieted down. The staff introduced themselves and proceeded to explain the programme, starting with the reasons the war began, again invoking a moral discourse about greed, injustice and jealousy. They also emphasised the importance of traditions. Then the section chief and other dignitaries, such as the deputy chairman who had come from Makeni to attend the bonfire, stood up and thanked Fambul Tok for their presence, again fulfilling their leadership duties. The Outreach Committees and the Reconciliation Committees were then called forward and the music began.

As the drumming began and the Sampa[33] started dancing, the mood changed. People became quiet and began to watch and really listen to the music. The Sampa sang songs about the roles of women, such as how to get a man to care or demonstrating how to sit in different positions to seduce a husband. In one instance she also sang about the rebels: "When then the rebels came they thought they could destroy everything but we are still here."[34] As the Sampa danced, more people (particularly youth) gathered around and people became entranced in watching the dance and singing along. Some began dancing. The atmosphere had significantly shifted from loud and chaotic to attentive and engaged. The music then stopped and the confessions began.

Confessions and Forgiveness

"So much time has passed and there are many differences. But talking face-to-face will help you get the confidence and freedom to see yourselves as one", said a staff member. They state that in order to unite, you must first "get things off your chest" so that your heart "may cool". The organisation's purpose was to provide an opportunity for people to discuss war-related issues, particularly inter-personal issues, in a safe set aside space.

[33] As noted in the introduction, this is a woman dressed in traditional garb who sings and dances. She is part of the female secret society.
[34] This is particularly interesting because it provides a small insight into how traditions and songs have perhaps transformed since the war.

Staff placed a bench in the centre of the circle and asked people to come up and "blow their minds". Often it was not immediate; individuals appeared hesitant to come forward and talk. Between eight and fifteen people would come up to tell their stories. At this point, the chatter would begin again, in the midst of people discussing their war-related experiences. Some told long stories of hardship and turmoil, recounting difficult struggles to survive and even serious acts of violence. One man accounted a gruelling story of being shot in both arms, pointing and saying, "The rebels gave me this problem." After he was shot, he ran to the bush where he hid and when he laid down, his bleeding wounds were attacked by ants. He was saved by some friends who took him to Port Loko and then to Freetown where they removed some of his arm. "At the end all those amputees got something but they never helped me. I have nothing to say except to forgive" (anonymous bonfire account A). After his account, the audience began singing, "Now everything is solved." However, during this account, there was much chatter, some (particularly children) laughed at certain points. Audience members of all ages and genders did not appear particularly attentive to hearing these stories. In fact in some instances people who had come to watch the dancing then left when the confessions began.

In many cases the stories were recounted in a very hurried fashion that did not necessarily convey the intensity that may be anticipated from such a profound act of forgiveness. Much like Tim Kelsall's description of the truth commissions, people often told their stories in a "detached and clinical way" (2005, 368). For example: "My house was burnt by the rebels. Everything in my possession was looted, even some important documents. Above all I was arrested, tied and beaten but now I have decided to forgive and forget" (anonymous bonfire account B). Another confession went as follows:

> Today I am here because of the war. I came from Port Loko but I escaped here and my husband was killed. I was two months pregnant when the rebels came. During my stay, my son died. After everything, I have no power. I don't know them. If today the programme is here, I am ready to forgive (anonymous bonfire account C).

These accounts appeared to have little emotion attached to them and were conveyed in an almost formulaic fashion. People would frequently explain in a few sentences what they

had experienced during the conflict and would then end it with a reference to being ready to forgive. These narratives almost always portrayed the individual as the victim. Their tone and expression would largely remain the same as they conveyed their story.

Interview data evidenced a diverse range of opinions about the confessions. This section will, however, look at the range of perspectives from Gbintimaria, but also from the village of Makomray, where I was also present for the bonfire. Some people, such as this woman from Gbintimaria, thought it was good to discuss these experiences because "people who say things in the open are really ready to forgive and forget" (interview with MB, Gbintimaria). Conversely though, a male teacher from Makulon who attended the bonfire in Gbintimaria said: "I did not speak during the bonfire because of the crowd. I do not support public speaking of the war because it leads to more problems. It revives old malice and palaver" (interview with SM, Makulon 2014). Some people stated that discussing the war would only bring back bad memories and could cause what Sierra Leoneans often referred to as "hypertension".[35]

Further, people expressed diverse reasons for why they did or did not come forward and speak, and/or why they were or were not particularly attentive to these accounts. In Makomray, which is, like Gbintimaria, a mix of both Christians and Muslims, individuals frequently referred to their religious beliefs. As one male Muslim farmer stated: "I was happy when I stood up to talk because if you are in conflict with someone, you need to acknowledge for doing good things because God forgives those who forgive people" (interview with AK*a*, Makomray 2014). In another instance, an elderly Muslim man stated a similar sentiment "I was proud to see the confessions because that is what the Bible says, you are supposed to says your sins and ask for forgiveness" (interview with AK*d*, Makomray 2014). These statements again illustrate the importance of understanding the role of religion and religious epistemologies in Sierra Leone, and how this influences opinions and decisions. By understanding the bonfire through a religious

[35] A word Sierra Leoneans often used to convey a wide range of psychological trauma.

lens, some people felt a sense of relief by speaking about their experiences. As one Muslim woman stated: "I was able to speak freely at the bonfire and now I feel as though I have a free mind" (interview with MK*a*, Makomray 2014). However, perspectives about speaking publicly on such sensitive subjects varied. As one Makomray man aptly summarised: "It's different for individuals, some benefit, some do not" (interview with ML, Makomray 2014).

There has in fact been extensive research on this idea of speaking publicly about the conflict. This was not necessarily instinctive for many people, because it may have been counter to their social values. As much of the research on the truth commission suggests, cathartic speaking is not necessarily inherent or desired, particularly in public spaces (Kelsall 2005; Millar 2010; Shaw 2007). One woman from Gbintimaria was very strongly opposed to hearing these stories publicly: "Some things should be discussed in public, some in private. Some of the stuff discussed at the bonfire should have been private…Blaming in public is not necessarily good" (interview with KT*a*, Gbintimaria 2014). In Makomray too, a man made a similar point: "I think if it was secret, more people would confess. Many people and family members were present so many would not talk publicly" (interview with AK*c*, Makomray 2014). Such attitudes reaffirm what other anthropologists have written about secrecy and cultural norms in relation to public versus private (see Ferme 2001; Jackson 2004; Shaw 2007). Accordingly, while certain aspects of the bonfire ceremony resonated with some individuals, speaking publicly was not necessarily inherent or desired by some participants, particularly in public spaces. These opinions about the confessions illustrate the diversity of *individual* engagements in these processes and programmes. Some individuals had positive experiences while others did not. Some saw it through a religious lens, while others found it inappropriate, perhaps because of broader social and cultural values. Such experiences cannot be generalised but rather, more emphasis should be placed on the diverse nature of these processes and programmes and examined by looking at the different individual agents involved, and the environments in which they live.

A second factor to examine is the timing of the bonfire. These particular bonfires took place twelve years after the President declared the war over, a fairly substantial timeframe in which many individuals had, in fact, already come to terms with their experiences. In Gbintimaria, a woman stated: "I already had forgiven because of prayer" (interview with MB, 2014). The one and only instance where I witnessed a man accuse another man present of looting was in Gbintimaria, and when this happened, a physical fight broke out. In later discussions about this issue, a Makulon teacher, who had known the two for quite a long time, said: "I don't know why he said that. They fought because the man was discredited in public. They were fine before the bonfire" (interview with JSC, Makulon 2014). The section chief also told me that the accused person had in fact apologised to the man long ago so he did not understand why this was brought up. As one woman, who had observed the fight stated: "This issue should have been discussed privately" (interview with KT*a*, Gbintimaria 2014). Therefore, the ceremony had the capacity to reignite and exacerbate previously settled issues. A similar sentiment was conveyed to me in Makomray. One man, who was a prominent member of the village and had himself spoken during the bonfire interestingly told me that, although he had spoken out: "I had already forgiven before FT came because I did not know them, if you knew them (the perpetrators), you would have settled it yourselves" (interview with AK*e*, Makomray 2014). Thus, people had their own means of settling disputes and had already gone through other processes that had aided them in coping with these experiences (see chapter 6).

The final factor to examine is the war-related experiences of this particular area – Bombali district. With the exception of the incident stated above, few individuals claimed to know by whom they had been victimised and if they did know, the perpetrators were often no longer present in the area, meaning that proclamations of forgiveness at the bonfire ceremonies were not necessarily aimed at a particular person, but were more abstractly referencing personal declaration of moving on. War-related experiences in Bombali, as discussed in chapter 3, were different from experiences in other areas. This region did not become involved until much later in the war when rebel factions were already fairly

established. There were certainly some villagers who were complicit with the rebels; however, the experiences were very different from somewhere like Kailahun, where rebels had kidnapped and coerced people at a more substantial rate and had inflicted terror for a much longer period of time. Inter-personal relationships and communal dynamics were much more seriously affected in the Eastern regions (Kailahun, Kono and Pujehun). Rebekka Friedman discusses how in Kailahun, where many ex-combatants had originated from, the ceremonies acted as a space for ex-combatants to explain themselves and apologise (2015, 68-9). However, in Bombali, few knew who had inflicted harm on them or their families and as a result, the bonfire ceremony resulted in individual testimonies with no public apologies in relation to war-related issues. Therefore, these declarations of 'forgiveness' were more about outwardly stating how individuals intended to move on with their lives, as opposed to forgiving a particular person.

The victim/perpetrator dichotomy may have also been problematic. Few perpetrators came forward to apologise, in large part because few were likely present and if they were, they were not (from what I witnessed) willing to publicly discuss their wrongdoings. This could have in part been because this is not, or is no longer, how they wish to see themselves. Nor is it how village members currently view them. In Bumban, I was told about the presence of an RUF ex-combatant who had settled there, but the person would not name him because he was part of the village. In the instance of the man above, being reminded of his acts brought shame and unnecessary tension and an implication that this is no longer how he wishes to identify himself. Therefore, reviving these categories long after the war has ended may not be a useful or necessary means through which to frame discussions about the war.

While some people may have come forward to get things off their chest, there were far more statements that suggested many spoke to appease the organisation. As mentioned above, the man from Makomray had spoken out, but also admitted he had already forgiven long before the organisation had come. So when I asked him why he spoke he explained, "Speaking [out] was to fulfil the purpose of the bonfire so we deem it necessary to follow

the programme" (interview with AK*e*, Makomray 2014). These individuals confessed not for themselves, but rather as part of going through the motions that were requested by the organisation. This was also discussed in relation to the Gbintimaria bonfire. A Makulon schoolteacher also explained that "Some [spoke] as acknowledgement of Fambul Tok's presence while some did it as a spectacle…But some stories were made up just to have something to say. They did it for public recognition but there is not enough seriousness attached" (interview with JSC, Makulon 2014). The Makulon/Gbintimaria section chief reaffirmed this by saying he felt a duty to stand up and speak because he is a leader and in so doing, he hoped others would follow. This explains why most people who spoke at the bonfire were prominent members of the village, because, as representatives, they saw it as their duty to 'follow the programme' as requested and outlined by the organisation. However, a few spoke simply to be heard or recognised by fellow villagers. Thus, the signature Fambul Tok component was not particularly relevant or desired by many people. Villagers appeased the organisation by doing what was asked of them, or speaking out for the sake of it. Simultaneously though, individuals appropriated the programme to produce other, more meaningful activity.

One particular instance of this occurred in Makomray. The Mammy Queen did in fact benefit from this public testimony. She said: "It felt good to speak because I had things on my mind, I felt relieved after I spoke" (Interview with BB, Makomray 2014). At the bonfire the woman had discussed an issue in relation to her son. He had been working in a garden when some cassava was stolen and he was blamed, so they "brought him to tow and it took over Le 200,000 to settle the case. He has all these pains and because of the humiliation, he does not come here. He is now ready to forgive. I also forgive these things" (Makomray Bonfire 2014). Interestingly though, her testimony began by thanking the organisation and with a very brief account of events that had occurred during the conflict, discussing how she had had food stolen and had been hit by a rebel with the butt of a gun. The story of her son was secondary. However, in speaking with other villagers, this public statement of forgiveness from the woman on behalf of her son did in fact help to mend the relationship with others in the village, including the family who had made the

accusation. According to another village member her son had in fact come back since this apology and had been much better integrated into the village since this public apology (interview with AK*f*, Makomray 2014). This woman's case is a good example of how she was simultaneously 'following the programme' by discussing her war-related experience, but also took the opportunity to reconcile a more pressing issue unrelated to the conflict, which in turn, produced to a positive social outcome for her son and her family.

In addition, some individuals saw the bonfire ceremony as an economic opportunity. For example, at each bonfire I witnessed, there were a number of vendor stands selling sweets and *pegapaks*.[36] Women also walked around selling groundnuts. Most of these women were from the village or a nearby village where the bonfire was being held. Musicians and dancers were also paid to perform at these ceremonies. In fact, people tossed money at the *sampa* as she (or in one case, he) danced. Such events are crucial for vendors because there are rarely so many people in the same place and so some individuals, but particularly women, viewed it as a good opportunity to capitalise on. Similar to the man and his goat, individuals prioritise opportunities for financial gain, in large part due to trying economic circumstances and consistent struggles. While the goat incident was perhaps a bit sneaky and did ultimately generate some social tension, these women were simply seizing an economic opportunity wherein many people would be present and it would be a good opportunity to sell their goods. Both scenarios were financially motivated; they were just enacted in different ways. Therefore, the organisation's presence created an opportunity for some individuals to creatively capitalise and obtain financial gain.

The components of the ceremony deemed 'traditional' certainly seemed to resonate with people as well. Different dances and music were performed based on pre-existing beliefs and traditions in different areas of the district. For example, Gbintimaria had a Laminaya circle, a particular dance specific to the male secret society; in Saltenien a band played

[36] Small plastic packets of hard alcohol, such as gin and vodka

Bubu music, which was specific to that particular chiefdom. This music was nostalgic for some and it was not new or specific to the organisation, but rather an already embedded part of the social structure within the villages. In Gbintimaria, a man stated he had not seen a Laminaya circle in over fifteen years and it was very nice to see that again (interview with SK*c*, Gbintimaria 2014).

In addition, at the ceremony in Gbintimaria the morning after the bonfire, the atmosphere was very respectful. It began with Muslim and Christian prayers. Then a flour mixture was shared amongst all the villages in order to demonstrate unity. Elders recited prayers to call the ancestor's attention and speak to them, praying their souls were at peace. In the midst of these prayers, people threw money for additional blessings for themselves. A further part of the ceremony was later performed at the ancestral shrine where they provided more of the flour mixture and Kola nuts.[37] People appeared to be much more connected to this component of the ceremony. The atmosphere grew intense as they said the prayers. People demonstrated significant respect for these prayers, remaining completely silent and praying along with the religious leaders. This was similar to the respect and intrigue of the dancing and music. These components were, however, not new, but rather part of the pre-existing social structure and belief system of the village. This illustrates the reciprocity between the organisation and villagers and enabled people to come together under an umbrella of tradition and religion. Thus, while individuals capitalise on certain components of the programmes, the organisation also works within existing traditions and values. However, it is individual villagers who enact these ceremonies and seize the opportunity to perform them. Therefore, while 'tradition' cannot and should not automatically be conflated with the 'local', these ceremonies should also not be fully dismissed either, as are relevant and meaningful to Sierra Leoneans (also see Kelsall 2007). It is simply necessary to look at the activity of individuals and villages, which aspects they engage with and how they enact Fambul Tok's programme to make it their own. This *may* include components deriving from traditional structures, but this

[37] I was unable to attend this due to the fact that I am not part of the secret society.

should not necessarily be a presumptive starting point for organisations attempting to 'localise' their programmes.

Finally, the bonfire allocated space for individuals to come together and publically apologise for wrongdoing, even if it did not relate to the conflict. In Makulon section, elderly stakeholders from Gbintimaria took the opportunity to issue their own apologies in reference to the chieftaincy conflict. In his opening statement, the deputy chairman stated, "I will be the first person asking for forgiveness if I have ever offended anyone. I have also forgiven" (JB Speech, Makulon Section Bonfire). The current section chief also spoke during the confessions. He stated: "Today, if I have done anything to offend anyone, please forgive me" (AD Speech, Makulon Section Bonfire). These narratives did not really fit with others I witnessed at this bonfire or elsewhere. People tended to frame themselves as victims who were actively doing the forgiving. Virtually no one asked for forgiveness. Upon discussion with other villagers, it was mentioned to me that these statements referenced another, more prevalent issue in this area – the chieftaincy conflict. The chairman and the section chief, who were prominent leaders in the community, were both aware that Makulon residents were present and so they appropriated the space for the purposes of expressing their willingness to move on from issues relating to the chieftaincy conflict. They sought to both apologise, and set an example for other residents. This would ultimately lead to a more substantive private reconciliation process shortly thereafter (see conclusion of this chapter).

Therefore, the bonfire was itself appropriated by the organisation as a symbolic space for individuals to discuss and reconcile their war-related experiences. Its traditional roots derive from everyday occurrences, but it was re-made by the organisation as a spectacular, set-aside space to discuss the conflict. However, as illustrated above, certain individuals did not really engage with the spectacle component of it; rather, they used the space to discuss issues that were impacting their everyday lives. Therefore, while the bonfire may have been appropriated by the organisation from the everyday, it was in fact *re-appropriated* by individuals into the everyday.

Peace and Unity Produce Development: Fambul Tok's Legacies

In the Fambul Tok DVD, one of the shorter stories highlighted was in relation to a man from a Kailahun village who stands up at the bonfire ceremony and asks for forgiveness because he had destroyed the village Court Barry during the conflict. The chief immediately gets angry and says, "I will never accept this man, I knew it was you." Many villagers become upset and start yelling at the man. The shot then cuts to the next day where the chief says, "For the development of peace, I have forgiven him…since we have confessed and the wrongs have been forgiven, we will be united…we'll have to break through." This notion of unity and development proved to be a prevalent theme over the course of my research prior to, during and after the bonfire ceremony.

While the bonfire ceremony elicited mixed reactions, many did capitalise on the organisation's presence to benefit in some form or another. The organisation's messages of unity did resonate with some people. From the initial meetings up to the bonfire, the organisation emphasised how peace brings development and the importance of unity for development. At each meeting the phrase "peace leads to development" was reiterated again and again. In the introductions at the bonfire ceremonies, they would always state: "When peace is there, it will bring development." In other words, unity directly *produces* development. Individuals interpreted this message in different ways and ultimately engaged in various activities that reflected their ideas about what constituted as 'peace and unity bringing development'.

Fambul Tok's bonfire had seemingly provided a space for Makulon and Gbintimaria to come together. Upon visiting the villages a few months later, they had indeed made progress in reconciling. Some Gbintimaria residents stated that tensions had eased between the two villages and that some individuals were now more comfortable passing through Makulon than previously. Makulon residents were also going to Gbintimaria more: "The programme has helped with the grudges between Makulon and Gbintimaria.

Makulon used to never come to dances [in Gbintimaria] and now they are coming" (interview with FS, Gbintimaria 2014). Other participants mentioned that they were now farming together and sharing more labour than they had been prior to the bonfire. Perhaps the most significant shift was that after the bonfire, a few individuals from Makulon went to Gbintimaria to see the chief in order to settle domestic disputes (one was an extramarital affair). This act was not simply a subtle gesture of goodwill; going to the chief for the purposes of dispute resolution was a way of acknowledging his power and legitimacy as a section chief. Therefore, the bonfire not only united people from the villages, it also served as a basis for beginning to resolve the chieftaincy issue.

In addition, the Peace Mothers groups facilitated by Fambul Tok provide a space for some people to continue interacting and building relationships with one another, as well as a means of monetary income. These groups align with the organisation's discourse, which states that reconciliation is not a "one time event, but a process" (Fambul Tok website). They encourage females within the section to form groups and engage in a particular trade together, agreed upon and chosen by them. Most groups in Bombali are farming based, while other areas do fish trading or soap making. These activities create further opportunities to develop connectivity between villages within the section, as well as increase the community's capital.

Some women from Mayelie and surrounding villages in Benia section, where the organisation had been operating for two years prior to my interviews, were actively participating in a cassava-farming group called *Tawopaneh*.[38] They stored the cassava to sell and kept the money for when they would again buy seedlings. They also used the income to prepare food for those who participated in the work. This activity was a tangible means through which the section was attempting to actively facilitate unity: "We go help [on the farm] and it feels good because we play, laugh and joke. We work together and it makes me feel stronger…although I don't like the distance to the farm. It should be more

[38] Translates to "Let's Hold Tight" in Temne.

central. But it is good to be united" (interview with AC*a*, Maron 2014). This woman from Maron, a nearby village, expressed how participating in the farm was a positive experience and helped bring people together to work toward a common goal. Other people from Benia section also expressed positive attitudes about the unifying space the farming group provided. For example, the town chief of Maron stated that the:

> Villages are coming together more and we are more connected. Most of us didn't know each other within the section, it's because of Fambul Tok. Before the war it was more scattered. When we work together as a section it helps us. We share the benefit equally…and we are closer (interview with ALK, Maron 2014).

Fambul Tok staff do not actively facilitate these groups themselves but rather suggest them as a means of cultivating further unity. The label of the Fambul Tok 'Peace Mothers' was, according to villagers, associated with the organisation. However, it is particular individuals who organise and enact the activities, with little direct support from Fambul Tok (with the exception of the grants mentioned in the previous chapter). As a result, these women from Benia section capitalised on the opportunity to create a new group that enabled them to have consistent interaction with people from other villages. The group also served as another channel through which to obtain beneficial economic capital. Thus, while it is a programme advocated by the organisation, villagers make the decision of whether to form these groups, what they do (based on their own skills and experience) and are ultimately responsible for enacting these programmes themselves. Individual staff may provide advice, but they will not oversee any of the work or provide materials, they simply encourage the programmes to go forward.

In addition, individuals from different villages working with Fambul Tok also re-evaluated their dispute resolution mechanisms. In Mayelie, for example, virtually every interviewee stated that main consequences of the organisation coming and speaking with them about the importance of unity was that the villagers had begun to settle disputes amongst themselves, as opposed to taking it to the section or paramount chief. As the youth leader of Mayelie stated: "There are less cases taken to court now. When there are more cases there is no development. Now there is less money spent on cases" (interview with TT, Mayelie 2014). Such disputes generally cause rifts, not just between individuals,

but families, thereby creating challenges in everyday life, such as group farming. If families are in dispute this can mean that fewer attend, work takes longer and this can entrench resentment. Further, such cases cost both families money, which can also lead to last grudges. Therefore, by settling disputes amongst themselves, this was a means for Mayelie people to maintain unity within the village and section, as well as save money. As another Mayelie farmer said, "We settle cases with the town chief. [Before] we used to go to the Paramount Chief in Kamalo, now we settle on the farm or in our house and money that would have been used for an Okada is used for us" (interview with FC, Mayelie 2014). A male elder reaffirmed the importance of this unity: "[Fambul Tok] has motivated us to settle cases amongst ourselves because unity makes things progress" (interview with KC, Mayelie 2014). Although dispute resolution was not a specific directive from the organisation, villagers enacted Fambul Tok's messages about unity through structures that would help resolve more contemporary issues. Unity, as well as monetary savings, are means by which individuals and communities work toward development.

In Makomray, too, people mentioned that they were beginning to settle disputes amongst themselves. One woman, who was the wife of the town pastor, explained,

> Fambul Tok told us to try and start settling cases between ourselves. Persons can get summoned and they don't have money…so we have started rebuilding this system (1 or 2 cases)…For example if children are fighting, we settle it amongst families…Now we are settling small cases within ourselves, which brings unity (interview with MT, Makomray 2014).

Another Makomray man stated that he had observed a decline in cases since the bonfire: "I live across from the section chief and they sit on the porch to settle cases. I have not seen as many lately and I think it's because of the Fambul Tok message that they are considering settling problems amongst themselves now" (interview with ML, Makomray 2014). Therefore, the organisation's narratives may be influencing shifts in dispute resolution mechanisms, which refutes Friedman's point about reinstituting chieftaincy structures. These activities suggest that individuals are active agents in emancipating

themselves from chieftaincy structures in order to remain united and more economically stable, thereby making themselves the 'solution' to their own self-defined challenges, and actualising development.

Finally, it should be noted that some individuals associated *other* development projects that had begun since Fambul Tok's presence with the organisation's messages. Upon passing through a village, one man stated: "Before Fambul Tok, there was no construction, now there is a bridge being built. Fambul Tok promoted village work and people are working together better, unlike before" (anonymous, Malikia village). The man pointed to physical structures to illustrate how the messages of unity had resulted in positive changes within the village. In Makomray, similar anecdotes were recounted. The Mammy queen recounted how "After the bonfire, the Chinese came and wanted to build a swamp and employ youths. They saw we are united and work happened" (interview with BB, Makomray 2014). Another man from Makomray also pointed to the road and said it was built by youths just after the bonfire.

Further, other villagers from Makomray also mentioned that youths had not been using as much abusive language since the bonfire, which was intriguing provided that there was no mention of this at the bonfire ceremony. Upon further investigation though, I learned that shortly after the bonfire, the paramount chief had called upon the youths for a meeting, where he reminded them about Fambul Tok's message of unity and said that if they were caught using abusive language, they would be fined. Due to the fact that these events occurred just after the bonfire ceremony, some individuals associated these transformations with Fambul Tok messages. The road improvement was of course not a Fambul Tok directive. Individuals were themselves responsible for these developments. However, they believed that the messages of unity had motivated people to engage in these activities and had transformed attitudes that helped unite people and bring development.

Some in Makomray, particularly elders, also interpreted such discourses about unity through a spiritual lens. A youth explained that some elders believed the bonfire "took the devil responsible for underdevelopment" (interview with AK*d*, Makomray 2014). This belief was further confirmed upon seeing visible changes in the village, such as the road and not seeing as much abusive language from youths. This belief further emphasises the relevance of pre-existing social structures and illustrates how these interpretations interact with the organisation's discourses. The organisation is not the starting point, but rather is subsumed into the existing belief structure in these respective villages. This anecdote also demonstrates how the physical and spiritual worlds are not separate but rather intersect and generate positive physical and social outcomes (see further analysis on this point in chapter 6).

The above accounts shows that Fambul Tok's programme has been diversely interpreted and has directly and indirectly led to various social and economic shifts, *none* of which were war-related, but *all* of which seemed to correlate with a discourse espousing the relationship between unity and development. It was, however, individuals who interpreted and capitalised on certain aspects of Fambul Tok's programme in attempts to enact development. By employing their own agency, individuals moulded these programmes in order to procure particular desired outcomes that reflected their own needs, priorities and beliefs, not those defined by Fambul Tok.

Fambul Tok, Appropriation, the 'Local' and Ownership

As discussed in the previous chapter, Fambul Tok places significant emphasis on the concept of local ownership and allowing the programme to be owned by individuals in the villages where it works. Similar to the Special Court outreach programme and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Fambul Tok first and foremost had a specific agenda and discourse about its programme. Each district executed Fambul Tok's programme in roughly the same way, which, as demonstrated above, is problematic because different areas had starkly different war-related experiences. While there may

have been a need for inter-personal reconciliation in the East, this may not have been as pertinent in Bombali. In addition, it appears that publicly speaking about the war for many people was of little interest; rather, forgiveness was about individual declarations of managing their war-related experiences. Further, it did not seem to elicit *kol at* but rather was part of Fambul Tok's programme, and so some individuals participated in order to demonstrate respect for the organisational process, while others did it for public recognition. In addition, the timing of the programme may have influenced how receptive some people were to certain aspects. In fact, many participants, particularly those who had experienced the war, did not like hearing these accounts. Therefore, some components of the programme were a 'buy-in,' as discussed in the previous chapter, but others were actively capitalised on.

Villages and individuals were not necessarily "subjected to" Fambul Tok's programme, but the programme was in fact subject to individual interpretation and appropriation, based on a wide range social factors, including status, priorities, and religion. The organisation is, itself, made up of individuals who were able to connect with individuals in the villages. Simultaneously though, the village and their respective social structures had been in place long before staff arrived. Therefore, the organisation's discourse and activities were subsumed into the already existing beliefs and priorities of individuals. Fambul Tok's messages were often understood through a spiritual lens because they aligned with other messages from religious institutions. Individuals also creatively capitalised on the organisation's presence and the space at the bonfire to produce alternative outcomes. Village members from Makulon and Gbintimaria saw the programme as a channel through which to reconcile a more pressing contemporary issue. Another woman was able to apologise on behalf of her son, which ultimately helped in re-integrating him into the village. Peace Mother groups harnessed pre-existing skills (which vary from section to section and district to district) to create further economic opportunities for themselves and their section. Messages of unity also led to reforming dispute resolution mechanisms. These alternative interpretations and outcomes were, in essence, evidence of various individuals actually owning the programme and shaping it to fit their own needs and

priorities in diverse ways. Such interactions illustrate the importance of recognising the interaction between the organisation, the social structure and individual agency. These are all crucial factors to consider when looking at transitional justice programmes and their respective outcomes. Individuals, influenced by their circumstances and structures, pursued alternative, diverse channels because 'agency is about human capacity…to come up with opportunities and alternatives that are not 'automatic' but are inspired by the ways in which social realities always allow for many paths to be taken' (De Bruijn *et al.* 2007, 16). Sierra Leoneans ultimately engaged with Fambul Tok in multiple and diverse ways, demonstrating their continued creative capacity.

Discourses relating to local ownership and examinations of local transitional justice programmes should move away from discussions about societies and victims. Rather, these programmes should look more closely at the roles of individuals within these processes. Transitional justice can also be understood through the lens of the individual. Taking a place-based approach, understanding place as both the location of my research and the experiences occurring within a particular setting, allowed me to go beyond measuring effectiveness and impact based on the goals espoused by organisations and understand the needs and priorities from particular individual vantage points. It enabled me to see both how and why appropriation of Fambul Tok's programmes occurred by observing and examining the actual activity surrounding these programmes, the 'local' and ownership can be understood through agency and the outcomes produced by individuals. Thus, the place-based approach centralises individual agency and perspectives, which provide a more direct indication of values and priorities as well as illustrating the diverse engagement with these programmes and processes.

Conclusion

Fambul Tok's primary purpose was to help Sierra Leoneans move past their war-related experiences by facilitating a space for them to come together. While they have partially succeeded in helping them come together, the programme was not really about the conflict.

Rather, individuals appropriated different parts of the programme based on their own needs and priorities. Upon returning to Makulon and Gbintimaria after the Ebola epidemic, I learned that the chieftaincy conflict had much improved since the Fambul Tok bonfire. Shortly after the bonfire, the deputy Chairman called elderly stakeholders to the school (situated in between the two villages) and they were ultimately able to settle the conflict amongst themselves. After the settlement, they held their own bonfire ceremony, wherein a traditional healer washed the select people involved; they all prayed for forgiveness and the curse that Ibrahim had placed upon them was lifted.

While Fambul Tok was not a part of this follow up resolution and bonfire, the initial space created at their bonfire ceremony had allowed people to come together and had provided space for initial apologies and gestures of goodwill to be expressed. These chieftaincy issues were completely unrelated to the civil conflict, yet individuals still engaged with the programme in creative ways that produced their own desired results. Religious discourses and phrases like "unity brings development" certainly resonated with some individuals and as a result, villages did ultimately transform, just not in ways that were intended by the organisation. In examining organisations and 'the local', it is necessary for activity, culminating from both influential social structures and individual agency, to be the starting point, to better understand goals and priorities of the 'local'. However, just because individuals did not engage with Fambul Tok's programme for its intended purpose, does not mean they were necessarily continuing to struggle with war-related experiences. People engaged in a wide range of unrecognised mechanisms, which occurred simultaneous to recognised institutions, as a means of managing their own circumstances. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Unrecognised Mechanisms and Everyday Realities in Transition[39]

Introduction

The transitional justice toolkit has become a normative response recognised by academics, policymakers and practitioners as a necessary component of post-conflict reconstruction. These mechanisms designate a specific space, time frame and means with which individuals can and *should* move past their experiences. Even Fambul Tok, which is projected as more malleable and better in touch with the needs of Sierra Leoneans, had a broad preconceived idea of what their programme would look like in each village. Previous chapters have highlighted how many individuals either did not engage with these

[39] A version of this chapter has been published in a peer-reviewed journal. See Martin, LS. 2016. 'Practicing Normality: An Examination of Unrecognizable Transitional Justice Mechanisms in Sierra Leone.' *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 10:3, 400-418.

programmes or did so for alternative purposes. This suggests that individuals had alternative priorities and a different understanding of what constituted a transition, as well as justice. Therefore, these *recognised* mechanisms are only part of the process.

In fact, what is often desired is simply the ordinary – the ability to move freely, the eradication of uncertainty and threat of violence, the resurrection of routine – for which a 'new normal' must be established. Therefore, it is critical to examine how people engage with everyday routines to reconstruct and reconcile their war-related experiences. Das and Kleinman understand everyday life to be "the site of the ordinary" (2001, 4) and that the project of re-establishing 'normality' engages individuals in using everyday spaces wherein war-related experiences can be replaced with new experiences and relationships can be repaired. Ultimately, "the recovery of the everyday, resuming the task of living (and not only surviving), asks for a renewed capability to address the future" (Ibid). Therefore, it is not only institutions, but also individuals who engage in a variety of *unrecognised* mechanisms – processes outside the official scope and discourse of transitional justice – that help them gradually move past their wartime experiences and re-obtain some sense of normality in their everyday lives. By examining these processes, it will become evident how individual agents enact their own transitions and justice.

This chapter examines how Sierra Leoneans *practiced* normality through ordinary everyday activities, or *unrecognised* mechanisms. These activities were both the sites of transition as well as the goal itself, demonstrating how transitions do not have to occur in a set aside space, but can be enacted in multiple temporalities through everyday routines. I argue that some individuals were able to obtain a sense of peace and justice through knowledge, structures and institutions that had previously existed or persisted through the civil war. In the following section I will first look at how transitions are understood in official discourse, which in this instance refers to the general consensus of the transition timeline in policy, academic and practitioner circles and how these narratives compare to individual everyday experiences during the 'post-conflict' period in Sierra Leone. I will then examine the notion of 'normality' and why this is an important concept to employ in

'post-conflict' contexts. The second half will draw on empirical findings in rural Sierra Leone and highlight how individuals practiced normality by engaging in economic restoration, agricultural activities and religion. I will then analyse what these everyday practices indicate about periods of transition and how justice is often activated outside recognised mechanisms, through individual agency.

Transition(s): Official Discourses and Everyday Realities

Advocates of recognised transitional justice mechanisms tend to emphasise the extraordinary nature of the violence that occurred during periods of conflict and authoritarian regimes. Ruti Teitel, for example, writes: "[F]or these are extraordinary circumstances of past injustices" (2000, 28). Placing such an emphasis on the extreme (or extraordinary) nature of violence tends to reinforce the need for grandiose institutions to address these violations. This 'need' is reflected in documents establishing recognised mechanisms in Sierra Leone. The Truth Commission Act stated how it intended to "help restore the human dignity of victims and promote reconciliation by providing an opportunity for victims to give an account of the violations and abuses suffered… giving special attention to the subject of sexual abuses and to the experiences of children within the armed conflict" (2000 sec. 3, 1b). The first line of UN Resolution 1315 (2000) that established the Special Court states that it is "deeply concerned at the very serious crimes committed within the territory of Sierra Leone against the people of Sierra Leone." By highlighting the extraordinary nature of violence, these mechanisms then become vital for the transition to progress toward peace. The Special Court, for example, was considered by many to not just be useful, but a *necessary* institution in order to establish justice and, in turn, peace (Hollis 2015; Tejan-Cole 2009).

Post-conflict programmes and events also provide definitive benchmarks in the transition process. In Sierra Leone, the war was officially declared over by President Tejan Kabbah in January 2002, after the DDR programme had been completed (Kebbah Speech 2002). Further, the 'peaceful' nature of the 2007 national elections also signalled a "significant

step towards democratic transition and the consolidation of peace" (Christensen and Utas 2008, 519). These sequences of events illustrate how transitions are framed as a linear process whereby particular programmes signal particular outcomes: once fighters have been disarmed, the conflict is over; once elections are held, democracy and peace are established. In addition, transitions are treated as distinct periods, or "'zero time' by which past and present are foreshortened and reframed" (Hinton 2011, 7). These narratives do not recognise the broader context in which these events took place, the diversity of experiences or the agency of individuals in enacting their own processes.

In reality, determining official start and end points of transitions is a difficult task because experiences vary between different areas and different individuals. As Cockburn and Zhokav point out, "War can surely never be said to start and end at a clearly defined moment" (2002, 10). The notion of a linear transition presupposes a clearly defined end moment of a conflict where perpetrators and arms immediately dissipate and those who were victimised are able to transition toward peace. As discussed in chapter three, however, individuals had different experiences of conflict and violence. Some were directly impacted by violent encounters, while others predominantly struggled with obtaining material resources. Certain characteristics, such as fear of violence, uncertain economic circumstances, consistent movement and illness were defining features during this period (see further descriptions in chapter three). However, much like during the conflict, periods of hardship diversely affected different individuals and continued to do so after the conflict had 'ended'. Therefore, the everyday reality of transition in Sierra Leone starkly contrasts to the official discourses.

When I asked people during interviews about their experiences "just after the war", their descriptions were remarkably similar to their stories of the war, demonstrating how these challenges had continued. One woman from Makomray stated:

> There was a lot of hardship. We did not have any farming materials, goats, sheep were taken, and animals were sold for money. [There was] Serious hardship. Our children were not going to school. Everything we had that was putting them through school was taken away (interview with FB, Makomray 2014).

Many individuals had lost their livestock during the conflict and as a result, did not have anything to sell or trade in order to obtain the money necessary for food and seeds. Food shortage was commonly highlighted as a problem during this period as well. In Karina, for example, many people emphasised the food shortage:

> Things were very difficult for us. There was barely any food: [we] only had cassava, but no rice. Houses had been burned [and] the rebels looted our property. For about a year after we had to leave the village to find food (interview with BF, Karina 2014).

The inability to access food led to more individuals becoming ill: "Just after the war there was illness: hypertension, cholera, malaria" (interview with AFMK, Karina 2014). While these are common problems in rural Sierra Leone, medical issues were likely enhanced by poor diets and bad living conditions. This was compounded by the fact that people had limited means of obtaining financial or material resources, because of the difficulties of access to supplies. These circumstances reflect many of the everyday problems that also occurred during the conflict, demonstrating that while official discourses may have proclaimed an end to the conflict, individuals continued to struggle with the same issues.

During the conflict, too, individuals had come and gone to their villages. Some had fled to the bush, others to refugee camps in Guinea while some went to larger cities, all in an effort to escape rebel encounters. While some people permanently migrated to other areas, others did return, but these returns were gradual and generally an individual (or familial) decision. In addition, some of the rebels stayed and integrated into areas they had initially attacked or had been based at, while others gradually left these areas. Therefore, the conflict and 'post-conflict' periods were also charactertised by mobility and shifting demographics in villages.

In one interview, a woman said that when she returned to her village, the grass had grown so high in the road it looked more like the bush, where she had been hiding and where many people had fled when rebels attacked (interview with AK*b*, Mayelie 2014). It was as though the village and the bush had fused into one entity. Time frames, particularly in relation to the conflict and post-conflict eras, are also not distinct or linear; they

continuously fuse and merge making it difficult to distinguish one frame from another. This image reflects the continuity between the conflict and post-conflict eras and the precarious nature of transition. Victor Igreja argues that transitions are not linear, but rather occur in multiple temporalities. This idea refers to the "coexistence and simultaneous or consecutive experience of multiple time references in everyday life…juxtaposed with the dominant idea within transitional justice that the flow of time is homogeneous and mechanistic" (2012, 407). Periods of transition vary greatly and cannot be determined by an official start and conclusion of a particular programme, nor can justice and reconciliation be associated with a particular institution, particularly if the institutional understandings of these concepts are not meaningful to an individual. Transitions are not linear but rather occur in multiple spaces and relate to individual goals and self-determined progress. As discussed in chapter three, individuals were consistently negotiating their circumstances and finding creative ways of managing the presence of the rebels, but these were skills that Sierra Leoneans had used prior to the conflict and would continue to use long after as well. Many individuals continued to negotiate their recovery for many years after the attack. Some still struggle today.

Therefore, the points at which individuals begin and end their transition process do not reflect the timeframes established in official discourses. In addition, these official discourses and recognised mechanisms do not account for processes that have already been occurring in certain areas. Rather than being passive recipients of a particular institution, and its notions of transition, justice and reconciliation, individuals were active agents in facilitating their own processes by mobilising networks and capital in an effort to recover their everyday lives and transition to a 'new normal.'

On the Subject of Normality and Unrecognised Mechanisms

While the notion of normality has been discussed in conflict literature (see for example Finnstrom 2008; Koloma Beck 2012; Macek 2009; Nordstrom 1997), it has not been examined as extensively in post-conflict studies. In the preface to an edited volume on

post-conflict reconstruction in Cambodia, the editors highlight how the question of a "return to normality after violent conflict" is a relevant, yet under-researched question (see Ojendal and Lilja 2009, ix). Normality refers to the "social processes, in which the structures of the everyday environment are established, reproduced and negotiated" (Koloma Beck 2012, 53). It cannot necessarily be defined by any particular characteristic, environment or event but rather the *lack of* an alternative state. As German philosopher Thomas Rolf states, "If it…does not need [any] rational, no explanation for a deviation, no accompanying comment and no general justification" then it can be thought of as a normal, or ordinary, experience (Rolf 1999, 44-45 in Koloma Beck). Normality means different things to different people but the notion does often heed, as Ivana Macek points out, a particular moral charge of what is "good, right or desirable: a 'normal life' was a description of how people wanted to live; a 'normal person' thought and did things that were regarded as acceptable" (2009, 5). Henrik Vigh states that normality is also measured relationally: "…how life is presumed better elsewhere and how life was better or could be better in other times" (2008, 11). Thus, normality can describe a particular social state as well as a *desired* state of being, or a goal to work towards.

The backdrop of normality is the everyday, wherein individual engagement in routine activities and familiar processes can be better understood. Peacebuilding scholars also point out how an engagement with the everyday offers a "practical alternative to the liberal peace" (Randazzo 2016, 4) and acknowledges the relevance of these daily interactions and ordinary activity. The everyday refers to the space in which normality can become actualised, and "the medium by which agency is enabled" (Richmond, 2009). Therefore, understanding how transitions actually happen in practice and how these outcomes are produced requires "an intimate understanding of everyday life and…what a peaceful everyday life might be facilitated by" (Richmond and Franks 2009, 210-11). Shifting the focus to the everyday, or ordinary, then centralises the priorities and goals of individuals, how normality is constituted and in what ways they employ their agency to restore their desired state of being.

Normality, of course, changes and evolves over time. When notable, or extraordinary, events occur, they will inevitably shape individual perceptions and inter-personal dynamics within a particular setting. Communities and nations can be transformed by eruptions of conflict and violence, causing significant uncertainty in everyday life. People are forced to adapt to new circumstances where norms are uncertain and ordinary activity is no longer routine. However, these events do not necessarily create worlds anew, but rather become embedded in the transitive flow of already existing knowledge and experiences (Koloma Beck 2012, 51). Sharon Abramowitz discusses how Liberians' ideas about normality "affected how people negotiated new moral commitments and revived old ones while debating the psychological, social and institutional legacies of war" (2014, 63). Individuals negotiate their prior experiences with their goals for their future. Veena Das explains that an event "attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary" (2007, 1). Therefore, individuals do not 'return' to a previous 'normal' state but rather transition to a 'new normal' wherein war-related experiences become a part of everyday realities and discourses.

Due to the rupture caused by conflict, routines and priorities in everyday life shift. In periods following violence and conflict, life does not just become 'normal' again; it is first practiced. Re-establishing normality is a process in which new realities are negotiated, sustained livelihoods are reconstructed and narratives are re-framed in order to 'get on with daily life'. Peacebuilding scholar David Chandler suggests that these processes are 'non-linear,' operating within different 'rationalities' or 'temporalities' (Chandler 2013, 25). Individuals and communities slowly begin to re-engage with activities by first imitating what they perceive to be 'normal'. They do this through social interactions, routine religious engagement and economic endeavours in order to actualise this desired state. By 'imitate' I do not mean to say that people are 'pretending', but rather that they are re-enacting and reaffirming social and economic practices that may have become less familiar or altogether absent during periods of conflict and violence. Therefore, re-engaging with familiar ordinary routines in everyday life that constitute a particular normality is both a *practice* in normality and *practicing* normality.

While transitional justice discourses and research have largely focused on *recognised* institutions, peacebuilding has placed a much more significant emphasis on the role of local agents and the everyday. 'Local turn' scholars have provided some empirical evidence that engages with everyday engagements (Kappler 2014; Mac Ginty: 2011; Richmond and Franks 2009; Richmond and Mitchell 2012). However, these discussions continue to remain highly conceptual and theoretical, perhaps because such mechanisms are latent and therefore, more difficult to directly investigate. Thus, while there is literature that recognises such processes exist, there is significantly less literature that more precisely delineates how individuals from 'post-conflict' societies "fall back on their own (usually local) resources and get on with the stuff of everyday life" (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 776), or *practice* normality through ordinary everyday activities. The following section will illustrate how individuals were able to *practice normality* through *unrecognised mechanisms*. They engaged with pre-existing communal structures, such as economic restoration, agricultural engagement and religious activities in order to restore their physical and social livelihoods.

Unrecognised Mechanisms and the 'New Normal'

While elites and international actors negotiated the terms of the Court and Truth Commission, there were other, much more latent transition processes also occurring. As the threat of violence and uncertainty slowly began to diminish in rural areas, individuals began restoring sustained economic, social and spiritual livelihoods. By enacting ordinary activities, Sierra Leoneans were *practicing* normality, which included economic and physical restoration, agricultural activities and religious engagement, in an effort to transition to a 'new normal.'

Economic Restoration

In the midst of transitional justice institutions being established, a concurrent and much more practical process of economic restoration was also occurring in rural areas. As signs

of the conflict gradually diminished in these areas, people gradually began to re-engage in activities that would ultimately restore more permanent social and economic livelihoods: “People were primarily concerned with lost property and trying to rebuild; there was a big focus on working. People’s main focus was rebuilding” (interview with KC, Bumban). Many individuals had to prioritise essential survival needs, such as shelter and food, and therefore, were unwilling or unable to engage with recognised transitional justice mechanisms. People relied on multiple sources, such as remittances and loans, to obtain the necessary resources to re-establish themselves. These exchanges helped rebuild physical structures and reaffirm social bonds. As a result of these daily activities, individuals slowly began to regain a sense of normality.

Remittances from within Sierra Leone as well as from the global diaspora were frequently obtained through social and familial networks. During the conflict in Karina, the village had been violently attacked by rebels (see chapter 3); simultaneously though, villagers were continuously subject to everyday challenges of obtaining goods and supplies. As the violence subsided, some people recalled receiving goods from village members who were, at the time, living in Freetown or abroad. A prominent member of the village (who was briefly Paramount Chief) provided many supplies including medicine, rice and clothing. Another Freetown-based contractor also provided rice, kerosene and sugar. Receiving these goods in Karina was a gradually restoring livelihoods after years of challenging circumstances.

Other people recalled receiving money and supplies from relatives living abroad. A man from the Benia section had a brother in Norway who had sent medicine (interview with TT, Mayelie 2014). These supplies helped with practical individual needs during the post-conflict period as well as providing a sense of hope for the future. As the town chief in Makomray stated: “Receiving supplies helped us to forget. Slowly getting the things we lost, *small small’* (interview with LK, Makomray 2014). Fulfilling basic needs was the main priority for most Sierra Leoneans. These goods symbolised a shift away from wartime struggles to the gradual restoration of a desired normal state.

These exchanges also reaffirmed the reliability of 'big men' in villages. These are people who are "responsible for the needs of their dependents, and their dependents rely on them for resources, support and opportunities. In many ways such patron-client relationships are the norm, they are an accepted practice" (Millar 2011, 188). Big men refer to people who have quite often left villages for larger towns, but continue to provide financial support or resources to certain individuals or for the village as a whole to share. These relationships are an important part of Sierra Leonean society, particularly in rural areas where goods and services are not always easily accessed. The assistance from these 'big men' also signified the restoration of a normative social system that many individuals had relied upon prior to the war.

Monetary assistance was also critical in helping people rebuild their homes and agricultural livelihoods. Some people received gifts from family members and friends to help them rebuild. This was evident in the discussion above about Karina, however, this occurred elsewhere as well. For example, in Makomray – a town that had been attacked multiple times during the conflict – different people explained different ways in which they rebuilt their homes. One man explained how his brother simply gave him money so that he could rebuild his house (interview with FB, Makomray 2014). In most cases though, those who had to rebuild their homes received loans from family or friends and were required to pay them back, often with interest. For example, one woman borrowed Le 100,000 ($24) and paid back Le 150,000 ($36) over the course of six years (interview with AK*f*, Makomray 2014). Many other informants described similar scenarios in which they borrowed money from family or community members for the purposes of economic reconstruction. A loan could, in theory, place stress on a relationship. In Sierra Leonean villages, however, as Millar has pointed out, it was actually a means of re-emphasising social and familial ties and re-establishing trust and connectivity that, for many, had been strained or lost during the war. Therefore, these interactions not only aided in regaining physical materials and rebuilding visible structures, but it also aided in less discernible repairs with the reestablishment of social connections.

These accounts illustrate how rural Sierra Leoneans actively mobilised their own social capital in order to obtain the resources necessary to re-establish more sustained livelihoods. It should also be noted that NGOs (Childfund, Interaide and Caritas were mentioned in interviews) did provide some goods and services as well, namely food, seeds and farming implements. The presence of these organisations was, however, not sustained, nor were they consistently reliable, unlike friends and family members. Further, while these organisations may have provided materials, individuals were responsible for organising and enacting the actual farming. Highlighting NGOs also fails to acknowledge the many ways in which people actively negotiated and reconfigured their own recoveries.

I argue, however, that this reactive creativity and mobilisation was not specific to the conflict or 'post-conflict' eras. As Carolyn Nordstrom notes: "[D]estruction may necessitate creativity as a survival mechanism, but creativity does not in any way depend on violence" (1997, 15). Harnessing creativity is a skill that has been developed by Sierra Leoneans over the course of decades and generations. Sierra Leoneans, particularly in rural areas, have been impoverished for many years and, as a result, have become highly skilled at negotiating their circumstances and finding ways to make ends meet. People have, thus, continued to harness their abilities and find creative ways of supporting themselves. During the 'post-conflict' period, though, it not only served as a strategic means of physical and material recovery, but also provided a channel through which relationships can be rebuilt and social repair can be enacted.

These engagements demonstrate how Sierra Leoneans did not passively wait for outside help to begin restoring their livelihoods; they were active agents in facilitating their own transitions and meeting their own needs. Certainly, some areas did receive assistance from Non-Governmental Organisations, but this assistance still required active engagement to ensure long-term benefit from these gifts. As discussed in chapter three, some individuals did receive funds from the state-sponsored reparations programmes. However, the vast majority of Sierra Leoneans did not receive any state-sanctioned acknowledgement of

their suffering. Rather, Sierra Leoneans creatively capitalised on inter-personal relations and skills in order to re-establish and sustain their livelihoods, or practice normality. These normal practices restored basic needs, such as homes, food and clothing, acted as physical symbols that evidenced movement away from a state of conflict and reaffirmed social ties and structures that enable economic activity. These activities, in turn, helped villagers transition toward their own defined goal, a desired normal state of being, wherein everyday routines were revived.

Agricultural Engagement

Agricultural associations (*osusus*) are socially and economically critical to everyday life in many parts of Sierra Leone. After the war, these were particularly important for some regions. As a woman from Bumban stated: "There was nothing there, everything was gone so the only way we could [farm] was to collaborate" (interview with KC, Bumban 2014). Due to constant shifts in individual and familial movements, it was difficult for people to rely on the associations they were a part of prior to the conflict; however, it was also difficult to maintain portions of land without assistance. In Karina, a woman explained how they formed groups because many women were working alone and were finding it difficult to produce enough food to be sustainable (interview with FF*a,* Karina). Thus, in many instances, people really had no choice but to work together.

Osusus have long been fundamental to rural infrastructure in Sierra Leone, as well as many other parts of Africa. A certain number of people (anywhere between 10-20) will form a group and each individual will contribute a small amount of money to a common fund. One farmer in the group will take the money and use it for planting. This individual will then share some of their proceeds and/or will loan seedlings to the rest of the group members. This loan will be paid back to the individual lender with some of the crop at harvest time. Members will work together on this farm, but individuals will have their

own plots of land as well. Each participant benefits from the labour of the entire group. They rotate (daily or weekly) between farms. In addition, the group has established rules and regulations. For example, if a person is late or does not attend, the collector may fine them. These associations often have names denoting solidarity and unification. (I came across a number of these groups in the areas I worked: *Masianday*: "to help each other" in Limba; *Katia*: "you work for me, I work for you" in Madingo; *Tawopenah*: "come together" in Temne). In addition, these groups also act as a kind of social security in times of need. Members will contribute small bits of money over the course of the year. This money can then provide support, such as financial assistance for medicine or help with funeral costs, for members when unexpected circumstances arise. Therefore, the re-establishment of these groups was important for both short and long term economic security and general communal stability.

Osusus were also critical in restoring social bonds, which were also reflective of normal times. As Fanthorpe and Maconachie have noted too, most Sierra Leoneans continue to depend on agrarian livelihoods and this kind of associational life has had a significant revival in recent years (2010, 272). Agricultural activities provided space for re-establishing daily interaction and rebuilding relationships. A man from Karina said: "Farming helped [me]. We have songs we sing while we work and it motivates us" (interview with DB, Karina 2014). A Makomray woman had similar sentiments: "When we work together we are laughing [and] joking and it is reconciling and adds to quality of life in the villages" (interview with BB, Makomray 2014). Therefore, restoring economic structures was critical for sustainability, but it was a means of re-establishing social connections as well. Agricultural activities provided space for people to renew positive interactions with one another and reconsolidate friendships. These seemingly mundane exchanges aided people in gradually moving away from feelings of isolation and uncertainty and towards feeling a greater sense of communal security, routine and general enjoyment. A woman from Karina also noted this: "Keeping busy helped me to keep away from the memories. [While] working (in groups) and during this time there's fun and joking so it helps keep off from the bad memories" (interview with FF*a*, Karina 2014).

Another person from Bumban stated: “I was in Mabankin group where people assisted each other with farming. I became happy because my needs were being met and got me away from thinking about the war” (interview with PS, Bumban 2014). These quotations, from different villages, illustrate the general desire to move on and forget by replacing negative thoughts and experiences with positive ones. According to different individuals from different places, who all had experienced the war in some form, the consistent engagement with other individuals restored a positive social setting and helped people in their individual processes of gradually moving past their war-related experiences.

By interacting in a familiar setting critical to rural infrastructure, Sierra Leoneans were, in essence, practicing normality. Individuals employed their own agency to re-engage these daily routines by enacting and working toward re-establishing both a social and economic livelihood. In addition, the more frequent the interactions and the more regular the routines, the more individuals were able to overcome the sense of uncertainty and disconnect that had frequently dictated life during parts of the conflict. Engaging in these activities aided in a sense of righting what had been wronged, overcoming feelings of injustice and finding a sense of peace. As a man from Bumban stated it was “the normalcy of life [that] encouraged me to get away from the memories. I had no more resentment while everyone was going about daily activities” (interview with SS, Bumban 2014). The act of re-establishing these social and economic routines in the backdrop of the everyday was the practicing of normality. This constituted a ‘new normal’ and thus, gradually displaced war-related experiences with normal, ordinary routines.

Restoration of these structures also acted as physical symbols of a movement away from the war. As houses and farms became visible again, people began to feel more comfortable with their good surroundings wherein “strategies beyond mere survival are developed, life is continuously constituted and reconstituted. Uncertainty is handled” (Finnstrom 2008, 12). These structures served as reminders of the individual efforts of restoration and their new beginnings. As Mariane Ferme points out with reference to farming: “[I]n rural Sierra Leone, growing vegetation is often the only recognizable trace

of human intervention in the landscape. It is both a memorial to the past and a sign that the past is yielding to new forms of life" (2001, 25). Ultimately, these physical structures evidenced both the work that had been put in by individuals and the time that had passed since the conflict. These engagements in the everyday provided both necessary restoration for individuals and the results of these efforts provided visible evidence of their transition and healing, thereby reaffirming their 'new normal.'

Addressing socioeconomic circumstances has been highlighted as a critical issue in post-conflict reconstruction literature. Scholars such as Rama Mani (2002) argue that without distributive justice post-conflict societies will not have successful or sustainable transitions. One woman from Gbintimaria, stated that: "The fact that I have a business…It's not full justice, but no matter what I will never have full justice. But getting small things helps" (interview with MK, Gbintimaria 2014). Examples like this demonstrate how restoring one's business and the ability to acquire her own income, even the income is minimal still helps in providing some sense of justice to particular individuals. Both of the above sections demonstrate how it is not just direct violence itself, but the significant impacts of the indirect consequences of conflict that have long term effects on post-conflict societies. Simon Robins (2011; 2013) also examines how victims from Kenya, Timor-Leste and Nepal were more concerned with basic needs than state-sanctioned judicial or truth-telling projects. Therefore, it appears that prioritising basic needs in everyday life goes beyond Sierra Leone and reflects a much broader trend in post-conflict societies.

While this literature does indeed highlight some of the same points that I have been making, I have also attempted to go beyond simply stating that meeting basic socioeconomic needs can equate to some sense of justice and help with transitions. Rather, I have sought to illustrate how individuals did not necessarily wait for external resources to begin rebuilding. They had their own goals – re-obtaining a sense of normality and routine – and enacted these processes themselves. Most Sierra Leoneans relied on their own resources and networks to obtain goods necessary to restore their own livelihoods.

Re-enacting familiar activities, such as farming and frequent social interaction, reminded individuals that they were no longer in the midst of the conflict, but were slowly returning to a desired routine life. Engaging in these activities aided a sense of righting what had been wronged, overcoming feelings of injustice and finding a sense of peace. As people re-established their social and economic routines in everyday life, they were ultimately practicing normality and enacting their own justice.

Religion

Religion is not a category that frequently intersects with peacebuilding or transitional justice discourses. This may be because, as Daniel Philpott points out, dominant modes of transitional justice (and by extension, peacebuilding) largely rely on utilitarian or Kantian modes of reason, whereas religious rationales derive from a vertical relationship forged between a higher being and humanity (2007, 97-8). Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, many Africans interpret their worlds through religious prisms (Ellis and ter Haar 2007) and Sierra Leoneans are no different. In fact, religion and religious institutions, such as the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL), played a critical (and largely unrecognised) role in negotiating terms that ultimately ended the conflict (Hurd 2016). The IRCSL also partnered with the TRC to provide support for the 'traditional' ceremonial component of their programme. These are, however, larger recognised religious institutions. The last chapter discussed how religion was a lens through which Fambul Tok was interpreted. This section moves beyond larger organisations and how they are interpreted through a religious lens, and instead examines how everyday engagements with religion proved to be critical in helping Sierra Leoneans manage their war-related experiences and practice normality.

Both Muslim and Christian practices and discourses are, as Rosalind Shaw notes, an integral part of everyday life in Sierra Leone:

> For Muslims [and] Christians…trusting in God, submitting oneself to his will, and either gratefully acknowledging or patiently enduring what he sends you form a moral imperative. Expressions in Sierra Leonean language make these normative sentiments part of everyday spoken reality: if God gree[40] (if God Agrees); ah tell God tenki (I tell God 'thank you'); God de (God is there) (2009, 214).

Religious discourses are consistently integrated into everyday greetings and discussions. These religious sentiments are a critical part of social exchanges and norms, illustrating their conscious and sub-conscious prevalence in Sierra Leonean everyday life.

Before examining religious engagement, it is first necessary to analyse how people understand the concept of forgiveness and how this concept has manifested in practice. In interviews, many individuals mentioned that government officials and NGO workers were coming to their villages and telling them to "forgive and forget". While these two words were often spoken in tandem, 'forgive' and 'forget' were not necessarily synonymous or interchangeable. Many individuals made it very clear that they "could forgive but not forget". As one man stated: "I will forgive because I am alive, but I will not forget. It was like a bad dream. When I wake up I forget about it, but the old wounds are there" (interview with GSC, Bumban 2014). This quote evidences how forgiveness was often defined as "not seeking revenge". However, many people did not know who had wronged them so 'forgiveness' related more to one's own thoughts and letting go of the resentment felt by past events. Similarly, 'forgetting' also did not mean a complete erasure of events but rather a means of social reconstruction (Shaw 2007). 'To forgive and forget' is merely a phrase that encapsulates the very concept of redeeming one's own livelihood and freeing oneself from thoughts of revenge and loss.[41] Understanding forgiveness in this sense ultimately demonstrates how this was an individual experience that was largely about actively engaging in activity that would aid in forgetting. Restoring a sense of normality embodied in the routines and practices of everyday life was one means through which people were able to forgive and forget.

[40] These are all expressions from the Krio language.
[41] Hannah Arendt describes forgiveness in a similar manner (see *Human Condition* 1958, 237). Michael Jackson also engages with a similar concept of forgiveness (see *West-African Warscapes* 2005, 368).

Many Sierra Leoneans found comfort in religious spaces and discourses – both Christian and Muslim. Individuals from different villages, genders and religions recalled such instances. An elder Christian woman from Bumban who had lost her husband said she found emotional support in the Church and that it was a comfortable place for her to discuss her experiences and her continued struggles since the end of the war (interview with MC, Bumban 2014). In addition, divine messages and verses discussed in both Churches and Mosques provided people with a sense of hope and a framework that encouraged people to make sense of their experiences as well as move past and forgive those who had wronged them. In one instance, an informant recalled the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). A young man from Mayelie said his pastor had related this story to the war: "The Good Samaritan was about a man…almost killed but [the man] had hope so it relates to the war that one day we will be okay...Hope and faith is what helped us to forget" (interview with ST*c*, Mayelie 2014). This parable was told by Jesus in response to a question from a lawyer and encourages individuals to "love thy neighbour". However, in this instance the interviewee highlighted a particular component that had resonated with his war-related experiences. The sermon had encouraged this man, and others, to have mercy for those who had wronged them in the conflict, perpetrated violence and caused hardship. By listening and engaging with these messages, people were encouraged to focus on 'forgetting' about their bad memories and desires for revenge in order to restore their normal life.

In other instances, interviews conveyed far more fatalistic attitudes, both in relation to forgiveness and understanding why the war happened. One Imam said that he would remind his audience of three points: "One: We will not be here forever, God will judge [the rebels]; two: If [one] keeps asking for punishment he is destroying God's creation; three: If [one] asks for punishment, his children may be wronged by somebody else…whatever happens is the will of God, so wait for his judgment" (interview with AARK, Karina 2014). Another Imam from a different village explained: "Trust in God helps me to forget – all things happened because of God. I preach messages about God

creating you so when something has happened to you, leave it to God" (interview with AC*b*, Maron 2014). These attitudes are embedded in an epistemological framework of how Sierra Leoneans understand their own capabilities. Individuals are not entirely in control of their own fate and, as a result, claim the moral agency of an innocent victim (Shaw 2009). This is not to equate fatalism with blamelessness nor is it supposed to imply that these individuals are resigned to their circumstances; rather, it is to acknowledge that discourses surrounding concepts like justice and forgiveness derive from diverse social and moral constructions and cannot be discredited regardless of how 'right' or 'wrong' they may be perceived. Therefore, Sierra Leoneans are not simply passive recipients of religion and its discourses, but rather actively engaged with it for the purposes of understanding, justifying and forgiving their war-related experiences.

Engaging with the Sierra Leonean understandings of cosmology and divine intervention may also serve to potentially explain why revenge killings were fairly uncommon in rural Sierra Leone. Rather than seeking short-term retribution, many individuals were able to forgive those who had wronged them or reconcile their experiences due to the belief that God will punish those who have done wrong. A Muslim woman from near Karina, who attends the Mosque of the Imam mentioned in the previous paragraph, told me that during the war she had been injured by the rebels and no longer has feeling in one hand. As a result she is unable to go to the farm or cook which she frequently finds isolating. When I asked about how she has managed this experience over the years she said: "I leave everything to God, those men will be judged. I don't know the person who hurt me. They are left to God's judgment" (interview with MK, Mayamgbo 2014). In believing that God's judgment will prevail (in this life or the next) this woman's comment reflects how many individuals engaged with their religious and spiritual beliefs. They believed that retribution and punishment could also be embodied in divine redress and, as a result, were able to let go of the notion of revenge and find some sense of peace and justice. These comments reflect a common belief in Sierra Leone that "God's justice transcends human revenge and…closes perpetuating cycles of resentment and retribution. Calls for forgiveness turn out to be alternative ways of articulating justice" (Shaw 2009, 223). By

examining how Sierra Leoneans engage with their religious beliefs, we gain insight into some alternative conceptualisations of forgiveness and justice.

Informants also emphasised the notion of 'God's doing' as an explanation for why the war happened. An Imam from Karina stated he often reminded his constituents that according to the Koran, every 100 years people must experience some type of war and individuals must endure hardship to test their commitment (interview with AFMK, Karina 2014). One elderly man from Karina confirmed this. He said that they often heard the message 'whatever happens is the will of God. That helped me a lot' (interview with DB, Karina 2014). Therefore, some individuals accepted their war-related experiences as part of their religious commitment to 'God's doing'. Another man from Makomray stated a similar sentiment: "My faith [helped me to forgive] because the war was God's plan, so I forgive" (Interview with LK, Makomray 2014). I heard similar statements from other villages and people with different experiences as well. A man who had his arm amputated after he was shot during the conflict also said he was able to overcome his struggles by engaging with the Church because "all that has happened is the work of God" (interview with SK, Panlap 2014). A woman from Mayelie, who had lost a young child during the conflict due to the inability to access basic medical care, also stated: "As a Muslim, I have forgiven because it is the will of God and I am Godfearing" (interview with Ak*a*, Mayelie 2014). Individuals, both Christian and Muslim, were able to rationalise their own pain and suffering through these religiously inspired explanations about *why* these events had happened. These examples show that religious messages ultimately aided in a general acceptance of war-related experiences. While these interview narratives suggest individuals do not necessarily recognise their own agency, they are in fact engaging with religious discourses and as a result are *not* exacting revenge against other individuals who may have harmed them in some way. Religious discourses and engagements aid individuals in making sense of their war-related experiences and help them to establish some sense of peace and justice.

Prayer, an act many people engage in on a daily basis, also proved to be another active coping strategy that aided people in their struggles. Prayer is at the symbolic intersection between the spiritual and physical worlds. A woman, who lost her son during the war, discussed how prayer consoled her: "…I sometimes dream of my son and cry but religion consoles me. God has given me a new life and through prayer I have been able to overcome all that has passed; I was not killed" (interview with MK, Makomray 2014). In another instance a man said, "Prayer helped; as a Catholic I would say the Lord's Prayer. If you pray to God, you sleep and wake up with good health. There is nothing affecting me presently so prayer works (interview with ALK, Maron 2014). In both cases, prayer was a means through which to obtain a desired outcome. The woman was "provided a new life" while the man attributed his absence of hardship to his consistent engagement with prayer. These examples demonstrate how engaging with the spiritual world is believed to correlate with outcomes in the physical world. Therefore, active engagement with prayer can be a channel through which bad memories of war-related experiences can be replaced with positive, visible outcomes.

As discussed in the previous section, both the engagement with and evidence of physical reconstruction consoled individuals. This suggests that the concept of forgiveness, understood (in part) as "reclaiming one's life", is directly linked to both the spiritual and physical world. As one man noted, "People who rebuilt easily, easily forgave, but people who suffered a lot, that resulted in loss of people or houses, they still find it very difficult to forgive" (interview with SK, Makomray 2014). This statement demonstrates how, for some people, ideas about forgiveness are intertwined with their physical capacity to rebuild. Ridding oneself of vengeful thoughts as well as restoring the ability to support oneself were both critical aspects that aided individuals in their ability to transition. Individuals believed that their diligent engagement with God enhanced their physical livelihoods. The spiritual and physical realms are connected through religious engagement in everyday life.

These religious discourses and engagements were critical in transitioning to a 'new normal' in Sierra Leone. One Imam noted how, "I preached messages of hope and peace…these messages helped those who were discouraged and disturbed [because] their faith brought them back to a sense of normality' (interview with AFMK, Karina 2014). Both the spoken encouragement from religious figures and regular acts of engaging with religious discourses and rituals, including the act of regularly attending the Church or Mosque, were practices in normality. People were able to come together and interact again on a regular basis and re-familiarise themselves with a particular and comforting routine which helped them, at least in part, to 'forgive.'

Religion thus played a critical role and, therefore, should not be side-lined or dismissed by academics and practitioners based on the fact that it does not align with their notions of justice or does not fit nicely into the values proffered by the transitional justice 'toolkit'. In fact, many of the themes discussed in transitional justice and peacebuilding are particularly moral in nature and "[i]ssues such as 'truth', 'justice', 'forgiveness' and 'peace' have long been the domain of theologians" (Brewer *et al.* 2013, 155). Furthermore, religion is often the lens through which many people understand and interpret the events and challenges occurring in their everyday lives. Therefore, the role of religious practices and discourses should be more explicitly recognised and understood to better contextualise how a desired state of being, or normality, can be reached.

Normality in Everyday Life: Implications from Sierra Leone

This chapter has sought to move beyond understanding transitional justice processes through the lens of institutions and instead examined the role of the individual and the various ways in which they engage with the programmes, as explored in chapter 5, and the social structures available to them. In so doing, I analysed how individuals understood their goals and the unrecognised mechanisms by which they enacted their own processes of transition and justice. While there has been more literature looking at how transitional justice can become localised, there has still not been a significant engagement with how

practices occurring in everyday life can also be brought into the broader transitional justice framework. Therefore, this section seeks to elaborate on the intersection between the everyday, normality and the enactment of transitions and justice.

The everyday practices of Sierra Leoneans, namely their engagement with both physical and spiritual activities in everyday life in an effort to obtain a sense of normality, would not be considered under the umbrella of transitional justice. Policymakers, academics and practitioners have largely focused on how larger institutions can facilitate transitions and justice *for* societies. For example, the Special Court was doing justice for Sierra Leoneans, as though the Court itself was the 'positive' force coming in to rectify or replace the 'negative' forces. Similar to how the war 'met them,' justice was being 'laid' (Crane 2005, 1685) for Sierra Leoneans. Special Court head prosecutor David Crane stated that the tribunal is "for and about the victims, their families, as well as their towns and districts" (Crane, 1684). Treating justice in this way meant that Special Court architects and employees were treating these individuals as a homogeneous group and making assumptions both about their needs and priorities. In addition, the transition was assumed to be a linear process in which justice would facilitate the broader transition.

This was, however, not the case. Many Sierra Leoneans were either unable or unwilling to participate or engage with these recognised mechanisms. This did not mean, however, that they did not go through any sort of transition; rather, their transition was defined by individual needs in everyday life and an engagement with social and economic structures that were relevant and meaningful. As highlighted in the previous chapter, individuals had their own priorities and thus, sought to appropriate Fambul Tok's programmes. Individuals defined their own goals and enacted their own processes in everyday life in order to work toward their own desired state of normality, which in turn, worked to facilitate their own notions of transitions and justice. Therefore, the everyday can be seen as the site of normality, where people are, both individually and communally, working towards their goals of the routine and ordinary. These repeated actions and engagement with familiar activities and spaces, such as religious and social associations,

brought individuals together and the more individuals repeated these actions and reaffirmed their familiarity with their own ideas of normality within the everyday, they were able to gradually move past their war-related experiences. Agricultural activities provided a means through which people were able to restore their social and economic livelihoods and come together toward a common goal, which aided in overcoming their feelings of isolation and uncertainty. Religious discourses and practices also provided many individuals with support by creating a space for social interaction, explanations of suffering and healing and justifications for forgiveness. These practices led to physical evidence of economic and social repair, ultimately symbolising a transition to a 'new normal' or "descent into the ordinary" (Das 2007).

Transitional justice discourses have, more recently, shifted to engage with notions of the 'local'. However, as discussed in previous chapters, equating the 'local' with the national, as well as with culture and tradition, the literature has largely continued to treat individuals as passive recipients of programmes and has overlooked the activity that occurs outside the institutional and discursive scope. As Kimberely Theidon notes, "[Transitional justice] is not the monopoly of international tribunals or states, individuals and collectives also mobilise the ritual and symbolic elements of these transitional processes" (2006, 436). By enacting Shaw and Waldorf's place-based approach to research and analyse these activities, it does not use the recognised programme as the starting point of investigation, but rather the perspective of the individual. Understanding perspectives from this point of view evidences that particular aspects of these programmes were appropriated because these better aligned with their individual practices of normality in everyday life. Thus, everyday activities were also symbols of transition and justice.

These latent, unrecognised processes in Sierra Leone illustrate how transitional justice discourses about doing justice for societies within a particular timeframe are misleading. As evidenced in this chapter, transitional justice is not only institutional, but also individual. Different engagements aided different individuals in their transitions. Furthermore, these processes did not occur in a designated period of time, nor

did they occur in a linear fashion. Such assumptions fail to "grasp the complex realities of people living in sociocultural contexts where multiple temporalities are experienced in everyday life" (Igrega 2012, 408). These experiences are, like the conflict itself, diverse, occurring in different spaces at different times.

Furthermore, transitions and justice do not have to be visible or 'set-aside' to be successful. By engaging in familiar everyday spaces, people have a means through which they can practically rebuild physical structures and social relations, which will have a greater impact on their lives in the longer term. Restoring everyday routines and normality are also legitimate goals. Practices seeking to enact these goals can also constitute as effective channels through which to obtain transition and justice. Therefore, meaningful processes that achieve the same outcomes as recognised transitional justice can and do occur simultaneous to, and outside of its official scope.

Transitional justice – both as a concept and as a practice – has expanded so much it is practically bursting at the seams. Is it useful or necessary to incorporate yet another concept into this discourse? I would argue that it is not necessarily an expansion but rather, a recognition. Individuals will continue to enact these culturally and socially relevant productions with or without being recognised as transitional justice. To quote Ann Nee and Peter Uvin: "Life goes on, and social and economic relations are re-established; beer is shared, as are benches in the church. This coexistence is a far cry from justice in any international meaning of the term, but it is a recognizable and desired goal for many people" (2010, 181). The recognition of these activities is also an acknowledgment of the everyday as a legitimate space in which transitional processes can occur and that individuals are not passive recipients, but active agents in defining their own goals and, in turn, enacting their own transitions and justice in relation to both recognised mechanism, such as Fambul Tok, and unrecognised mechanisms, such as these everyday activities.

Conclusion

While recognised mechanisms are frequently the most discussed, particularly in transitional justice literature, there are other, unrecognised mechanisms that play a crucial role in helping individuals practice a sense of normality in their everyday lives. One reason recognised mechanisms may be privileged in some of this literature is, very practically, that they are easier to analyse and study. When an institution has goals and a set process, it is easy to evaluate whether or not it is successful. It is much harder to look at the more latent ways in which individuals engage in these unrecognised processes, and what this means for notions of transition and justice.

As demonstrated in Bombali communities, many individuals engaged in relevant unrecognised processes that aided in economic and social restoration. It should be noted that this process of re-obtaining normality was, of course, not the experience of all Sierra Leoneans. Some are still significantly impacted by their physical or psychological wounds while others are still paying back their loans. In addition, this reactive creativity and mobilisation were not necessarily specific to the conflict or post-conflict eras. Sierra Leoneans had been impoverished for decades and had become highly skilled at negotiating their circumstances and finding ways to make ends meet long before the war. People have simply continued to harness their abilities and find creative ways to support themselves. During this period, though, creative engagement not only served as a strategic means of physical recovery, but also provided space for social repair. In many instances these practical and spiritual engagements were critical in enabling people to overcome feelings of isolation and uncertainty that had defined their wartime experiences. By restoring familiar day-to-day agricultural rhythms and forms of association required to secure economic livelihood, Sierra Leoneans were actualising the state of normality they had desired. This demonstrates that peace and justice is not something that happens *to* or *for* post-conflict societies, but that individuals employ their own agency in facilitating these processes and establishing a 'new' normal. 'Normality' can be a useful framework for conceptualising these priorities and goals, which, for most, amount to

peaceful modes of securing a livelihood. By understanding what normality means in different contexts and how it can be enacted in everyday spaces, it can then become more recognised in official discourse and practice.

Chapter 7: Fambul Tok Transition(s) in Times of Ebola and Beyond

Introduction

At a Fambul Tok staff meeting I attended in April 2014, a month before Ebola's encroachment into Sierra Leone, there were lengthy discussions about some of the issues arising in the areas where the organisation worked: domestic violence, land disputes and farming or trading. These discussions showed that the organisation was aware that war-related issues were not necessarily priorities for individuals in rural areas any longer. Thus, even prior to the Ebola outbreak, the organisation had realised that if it wanted to continue engaging with these areas and maintain relevance, it would need to re-define its programme. In the thesis thus far, I have illustrated how individual priorities shaped the programmes from below by selectively appropriating and engaging with different aspects. This chapter shows how, when priorities changed entirely, programme beneficiaries were able to force the organisation to question and redefine its programme. In this sense, the more immediate priorities of individuals were in fact driving Fambul Tok to self-reflect and think about 'the way forward.'

There is some existing literature on how other institutional forces influence organisational shifts. Donors conditionalities, for example, often favour or influence institutional directions (Evans-Kent and Bleiker 2010; Oomen 2005). State political transitions can also influence why and how institutional practices change. In South Africa, for example, NGOs created to fight against the apartheid state actually became part of the new state apparatus (Habib and Taylor 1999). In the early 1990s, Latin American NGOs that had fought for open markets and the removal of authoritarian regimes also repositioned themselves as consultancies or social enterprises (Bebbington 1997). There is, however, much less literature on how participants push these programmes to evolve. This chapter thus explores *why* and *how* Fambul Tok has transformed beyond the post-conflict context. It will argue that new priorities and circumstances in Sierra Leone forced the organisation

to shift its programmes. The chapter will further demonstrate how it repurposed its narratives to fit within the Ebola and post-Ebola contexts.

The Ebola outbreak occurred in the midst of these discussions and the epidemic ultimately provided a new lens, at least temporarily, through which Fambul Tok could reframe its programme. It took this time to explore new organisational directions. The Ebola outbreak commenced in the midst of my initial fieldwork. In March 2014, the first cases were confirmed in neighbouring Guinea and by May Ebola had spread to Kailahun district in eastern Sierra Leone. The virus quickly spread throughout the country and as a result, Sierra Leone has been reframed primarily as an Ebola, or more recently, post-Ebola country, a dramatic shift away from its previous post-conflict status. In Sierra Leone, roughly 14,000 people became infected and about 4,000 died (World Health Organisation website) making it the largest outbreak in history. Beyond the death toll, the epidemic had dramatic social and economic implications for Sierra Leoneans. Fambul Tok was, thus, able to reframe its war-related narratives in order to fit this contemporary context.

This chapter examines why and how Fambul Tok re-framed its programme in the midst of shifting social problems and priorities. I will first examine how other transitional justice mechanisms in Sierra Leone understood and initiated their legacy projects and how Fambul Tok differed from these mechanisms. I will then briefly examine experiences during Ebola to understand how Fambul Tok's original purpose and approach could be extrapolated for the purposes of managing some of the issues that arose during the epidemic. I will then look at how the organisation implemented its programme, both during Ebola and after, in order to better align with contemporary priorities, illustrating how Fambul Tok's structure is agile and able to develop and respond to emerging challenges and priorities.

Transitional Justice Transitions: Legacies and Transformations

While transitional justice institutions are established to help societies transition from war to peace or from authoritarianism to democracy, their programmes are only supposed to be temporary. These institutions have stated mandates and procedures that dictate when and how they operate, what their main objectives are and how they see themselves contributing to the broader transition process. As discussed in the previous chapter, the completion of these programmes, as well as other national events, such as elections, often serve as benchmarks for transitional processes.

Since the official end of the conflict in 2002, Sierra Leone has not returned to armed conflict. There have been three successful democratic elections, a rise in the GDP and increased international investment suggesting that Sierra Leone did, in some ways, undergo a successful transition (Ainley *et al*. 2015). In fact, both the conflict and post-conflict eras now seem to be a thing of the past. As noted in the conclusion of the edited volume *Evaluating Transitional Justice: Accountability and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone*, Ainley *et al*. point out that more recent public discourses have shifted from discussions surrounding post-conflict transition and justice to referencing the maintenance of democracy and development (2015, 273). The authors go on to suggest that the lack of interest in transitional justice projects may optimistically be due to the effectiveness of the overall transitional justice process or it may, probably more realistically, be a product of 'intervention fatigue' and feelings of disappointment in the lack of meaningful reparations (Ibid). It may have also been that people had other, more immediate, concerns to address. Whether it was one or a combination of these factors, the question then becomes what happens to transitional justice mechanisms and their legacies after the transition is said to be 'complete', because peace has been (at least to some extent) established? How does an *organisation*, like Fambul Tok, transition and find new modes of engagement, but continue to maintain its core values and purpose?

While neither the Special Court nor the Truth Commission currently operate in Sierra Leone, both institutions maintain that they have left legacies that continue to impact Sierra Leoneans. The Special Court claims to have contributed to capacity building for the Sierra

Leonean legal system by training lawyers. The Court also created the Sierra Leone Legal Information Institute – a free electronic database that makes available all the laws of Sierra Leone (Hollis 2015). In addition, the Court's physical structure has been repurposed for other uses. Most notably, it was the initial National Ebola Response Centre (NERC) headquarters during the outbreak. It also houses Sierra Leone's Law School.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has a comprehensive report (available online) that provides a detailed account of the antecedents to the conflict as well as the conflict itself. The report also made over 220 recommendations that were legally required to be implemented by the government. In response, the government has established institutions, such as the Human Rights Commission, National Electoral Commission and Political Party Registration Commission. It also implemented the reparations programme, passed legislation to protect women and children, adopted codes of conduct for judicial officials and support for vulnerable groups, such as youth and those affected by HIV/AIDS (Mahony and Sooka 2015).

Much like the actual operations of the Special Court and TRC, though, these legacies do not have much impact on Sierra Leoneans in rural areas who, in large part, do not have access to internet resources and do not readily engage with the formal legal system. Therefore, understanding codified laws and reading the TRC Report are not immediate priorities for many individuals because these documents have little impact on their everyday lives and livelihoods. Furthermore, the vast majority of Sierra Leoneans do not have regular contact with the organisations founded as a result of the TRC recommendations. Therefore, these legacies serve as a reminder of the ongoing distance between institutional notions of what is desired and the actual priorities of Sierra Leoneans who, in some cases, continue to be impacted by the conflict.

Fambul Tok began as an organisation seeking to aid people in rural areas with their war-related experiences. However, over the course of Fambul Tok's operation, Sierra Leonean priorities shifted and certain aspects of the organisation's programme, particularly

components relating to the conflict, no longer resonated with them. A former board member pointed out that,

> The organisation has evolved significantly to the point where the original stuff – truth-telling, reconciliation – is the starting point rather than the main event…what communities said they wanted in 2014 is very different from what they said they wanted in 2008 (interview with former board member).

Therefore, it is not just external agents that push organisations to develop new agendas, community members' priorities also evolve and transform. Institutions must also adapt to address these new challenges.

While I was conducting my fieldwork at the onset of the outbreak, the organisation was aware that it needed to rethink certain aspects of its programme. In early 2014 it was not yet clear what these new programmes would look like. Fambul Tok had begun facilitating school programmes wherein children acted as 'peace agents' and were able to participate in activities such as concerts, bonfires, football and school quizzes, all based around some of the organisation's themes. There were also some discussions about further enhancing the community development component of their projects, like the Peace Mothers groups. However, nothing at this time was definitive. The Ebola outbreak thus provided a temporary answer to the organisation's 'transition troubles.'

Impacts of Ebola in Bombali: A Brief Overview

Prior to discussing how Fambul Tok shifted its programmes, I will first provide an overview of how the epidemic transpired in Bombali district and how it impacted relationships and social ties to better understand how Fambul Tok was able to re-mould its approach in the midst of new challenges and shifting priorities during this period. On 23rd July, Bombali district had its first confirmed Ebola case when a man travelling from Kenema (where the disease had already taken hold) to Port Loko,[42] stopped and visited relatives in a village just outside Makeni. After four days he fell ill and was taken to a

[42] A district just West of Bombali

hospital where staff took a blood sample. While prepping an isolation unit for the man, he ran out of the hospital and stayed in another village just outside Makeni. He was then taken to a traditional healer where he received medicine, which proved ineffective. The man died the day before his blood results were published, which confirmed he was in fact Ebola positive (District Surveillance Officer interview 2016). As a result of the patient's movement during his period of infection, the virus was rapidly transmitted to individuals in surrounding villages and towns, particularly within and just outside Makeni town. These areas of Bombali district became an epicentre of the epidemic from September to December 2014.

On 30th July the President declared a State of Emergency and established the National Ebola Response Centre (NERC), which was overseen by the Ministry of Defence. Emergency bylaws were passed in August 2014 and were enforced by both state (military and police) and traditional (town, section and paramount chief) authorities. There was a Le 500,000 (approx. $100) fine for anyone who broke these laws. These laws restricted people from: movement and public gathering, the intake or sale of 'bushmeat', seeking medical advice from traditional healers, initiations and circumcision and burials and funerals. Any individual suspected of Ebola or displaying signs of illness was to be reported and quarantined (Bylaws for all Chiefdoms in Sierra Leone document). These laws are important to highlight because they ultimately dictated social and economic life during this period[43] and mirrored some of the everyday experiences from the conflict (see below). Understanding how these periods were similar will provide insight into how Fambul Tok would be able to maintain certain narratives about its approach while simultaneously reframing it to fit this new context.

Both the conflict and Ebola substantially disrupted everyday life for individuals in rural areas. In one interview a woman stated, "In normal life, relatives come, give gifts but during Ebola they were not coming and it affects our livelihood" (interview with AK,

[43] From August 2014-spring 2015, respectively.

Mayelie 2016), demonstrating how this period was regarded as extraordinary, much like the conflict. People often cited their inability to practice certain activities, such as farming. Some areas did not allow *osusus* while others were more relaxed on this rule. There were no weekly markets to sell goods and travel was restricted so individuals were unable to get normal staple foods, such as rice, salt or fish. In addition, people were not able to see or access family members whom many depended upon for monetary assistance. As one informant stated,

> There were so many similarities between Ebola and the war…economically, activities lessened and there was no money so we had little to eat...you also had to be careful of instruments. If you hit a drum, it would attract rebels and if you sing, you might attract the government or chiefs (interview with AM, Bumban 2015).

Individuals placed a significant emphasis on these disruptions in everyday life and frequently paralleled these experiences to the conflict period. As one woman put it, "There were two wars in this country: the rebels and Ebola. The rebels you can see, hear and run away from, but Ebola, when someone catches it…you don't hear it or see it" (interview with KK, Bumban 2015). I commonly heard some variation of this phrase, which suggested that the ability to see and know one's enemy enabled them to react appropriately; people were able to physically escape and hide whereas the invisibility of Ebola did not necessarily activate such a feeling. Individuals did not feel the same sense of agency by enacting preventative measures. The invisible nature of the disease, compounded with the many state-instituted restrictions, further enhanced already uncertain and tense circumstances.

Both the conflict and Ebola periods enhanced uncertainty between individuals and strained social relationships. Individuals often stated that during Ebola they were never sure who they could trust and were cautious about who they interacted with: 'There was no handshaking. You were very aware of the peoples you met with and if you did not know them you would stay away. Even at Oxford[44] if a stranger came you would ask what area they came from" (interview with James Turay, 2015). In addition: "We were

[44] The name of a palm wine bar this individual frequented.

never sure of ourselves then, we were afraid of each other because people (known as Reckies) would come to look at land then come back and attack" (interview with doctor Suma, 2016). Some individuals compared the Reckies and the Ebola surveillance officers[45] not only because of their similar duties, but because both of these people were understood as the 'enemy.' As a result, individuals in rural areas often reacted similarly to these two types of 'attack'. There were numerous instances of surveillance officers or government officials going to villages and people running into the Bush, much like during the conflict.

In Bumban, for example, there was an incident where the section chief had reported a death but the burial team did not arrive, so after some time the village decided to bury the body. Officials from Makeni came to investigate and some people were afraid, so they ran away and stayed in the Bush for a few nights: "They thought the medical officers had come to intimidate them" (interview with AP, Bumban 2015). This shows that medical personnel operating in these areas were often understood to be an 'enemy,' someone to 'run away from.' These reactions symbolised the disconnect between government and rural areas. Not only were Sierra Leoneans simply not taking advice but they were actively resisting and avoiding the very structure and procedures put in place to protect them. Medical officers and government personnel *were* 'the enemy' as much as Ebola.

Finally, Ebola caused significant social tension between individuals in rural areas. Due to the fact that individuals were not permitted to touch one another, "People felt embarrassed to reject [others] and it caused grudges. They [still] feel it in their hearts" (interview with WK, Gbintimaria 2016). This was particularly a problem between youth and elders, who felt disrespected when their greeting was not reciprocated. In addition, there were on going issues between individuals who had acted or reported suspected cases and family members of those who had been reported. As one contract tracer[46] stated: "I was abused

[45] Individuals employed by the District Health office to survey cases in different areas. They were frequently met with fear and hostility, according to numerous accounts.
[46] Community members who reported cases to the Department of Health

sometimes, people would use abusive language toward me. Some people still have problems with me for reporting their family members" (interview with JB, Pate Bana 2015). The Ebola epidemic has resulted in on going conflicts between individuals and fragmented the social fabric of everyday life.

These issues – the rupture of normality and everyday activity, and increasing mistrust (both towards the government and between individuals) – created an extraordinary scenario that resulted in similar issues to the conflict. These problems were recognised by Fambul Tok. Its *Bridging Communities Network (BCN) – Facilitating Community-Led Response to the Ebola Crisis – Concept Note* document (which is similar to the document produced by the civil society TRC Working Group (see chapter 4)) framed the Ebola epidemic not simply as a health problem but also a 'community problem' in need of 'community participation.' Therefore, Fambul Tok was able to maintain its core approach and values but ultimately reposition their programmes to address the more pressing issues faced during the period of Ebola, and beyond in order to sustain the organisation.

Old Poyo in New Gerry Cans: Fambul Tok's 'New Approach'

Due to the pressing nature of the epidemic in rural areas, Fambul Tok, in partnership with other NGOs, shifted its focus to address Ebola awareness and prevention. The organisation spearheaded a network called Bridging Communities Network (BCN), which was a conglomerate of Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organisations coordinating with NERC to facilitate sensitisation programmes and awareness about Ebola, as well as distribute sanitary supplies, such as soup and buckets of chlorine. In addition, the initiative was headquartered at the Fambul Tok office in Freetown.

In the document 'Bridging Communities Network (BCN)' the stated purpose of these coordinated efforts parallels much of Fambul Tok's earlier post-conflict discourse. The introduction of the document describes how the initiative draws on lessons learned from after the civil war: "Rather than waiting for or relying on external leadership in responding

to this crisis, we are mobilizing now to provide collective civil society leadership from within Sierra Leone" (p. 1). This point highlights how experiences during the post-conflict period were critical to learn from in order to manage the Ebola crisis. Ultimately, Fambul Tok led the efforts of this Network because of their "experience supporting community-led efforts to address consequences of the civil war" (p. 4). Therefore, the organisation pointed to the need for Sierra Leonean skills and knowledge (i.e. local actors) to be central to Ebola awareness and prevention, as well as *their* (Fambul Tok's) experience in engaging with rural areas, emphasising the importance of involving the organisation in combatting the epidemic.

The ways in which the document frames both the problem and the solution is distinctly similar to the organisation's initial discourses. The BCN document frames the crisis not solely as a medical problem but also as a *community* problem which "has been largely ignored in the current national and international response to the crisis" (p. 1) in need of Sierra Leonean leadership. It further goes on to say that,

> There is not currently a mechanism to do this on a coordinated or systemic level. In addition, there is a yawning communication gap in between the national and district mechanisms for Ebola response and the communities themselves. **That is the gap that the Bridging Communities Network is stepping in to fill** (p. 2, their emphasis).

These notes exemplify how this initiative (and most notably Fambul Tok) emphasises similar points to those that had initially framed the need for the organisation. As the document states, there was a significant geographical and psychological distance between those who had been trying to do outreach and individuals in rural areas: "Programs designed to change these behaviours [for Ebola prevention] have either not been able to reach those most in need, or they have been hampered by pervasive mistrust of those conducting the programs" (p. 2). Similarly, the TRC Working Group Report also concluded that Sierra Leoneans were often unclear about the purpose of the TRC and thus, should have maintained a closer relationship with Sierra Leonean civil society groups and organisations. Therefore, Fambul Tok (along with other organisations) was seeking to fill a critical gap previously highlighted during the post-conflict era to better enact Ebola-related programmes. The organisation thus maintained its role as a translator between

international organisations and rural areas, but reframed its purpose to better respond to more immediate demands of individuals in rural areas.

Further, the Bridging Communities document also emphasises the need for local ownership and participation: "Given the communal nature of the spread of the virus, successful prevention requires full community participation" (p. 1). This discourse mirrors some of Fambul Tok's core values and its approach, such as meeting people in their own communities and "walking with communities" to find their own answers. The document also advocates for recruiting local leaders and promoting local ownership of the process: "Local leaders, from the communities themselves, are best poised to know what it takes to reach their community members, how to sensitively address their fears and how to share important knowledge in the way it will be received" (p. 2), which closely aligns with descriptions of Fambul Tok's philosophy in its book, summed up as "the recognition that the people most impacted by a conflict are the ones who know best about their needs" (Fambul Tok book, 33). Fambul Tok reframed its discourse to both reflect the initial post-conflict discourse and simultaneously address more contemporary issues; thus it preserved its original approach and values. It was able to reposition itself in the face of Ebola, begging the question of whether the organisation's approach can in fact be extrapolated for the purposes of other programmes and frameworks. This is explored further below.

Fambul Tok's programme Beyond Ebola: The People's Planning Process

Although the Ebola epidemic provided the organisation with a temporary answer to its 'transition troubles,' Fambul Tok also recognised that this would not be a long-term solution. Therefore, in the midst of these Ebola activities, the organisation began consulting with a few select areas in three of its six participant districts: Kailahun, Moyamba and Koinadugu[47] in order to find a more sustainable 'way forward.' In each

[47] Notably, Ebola did not impact Koinadugu and Moyamba as substantially as other districts where Fambul Tok worked (such as, for example, Bombali). The justification was geographical - one north (Koinadugu), one south (Moyamba) and one east (Kailahun).

district, staff worked in one chiefdom to identify new ways that Fambul Tok could assist in addressing more contemporary issues in rural areas, including both post-Ebola concerns, and issues that had arisen prior to the epidemic.

In one of these chiefdoms – Neini Chiefdom in Koinadugu – a document entitled *Neini Chiefdom People's Plan for Ebola Prevention, Healing and Recovering: A Post-Ebola Community Driven Approach to Recovery and Resilience* was written by the organisation to outline the premise for their 'new approach.' It is worth noting that this document was not publicly released and so it would not have necessarily been projected to wider audiences. At the time I obtained this document in January 2016, the organisation had yet to publicise this process. However, they do now have a page on their website about their new programme, discussed in further detail below. According to this document, the organisation held five sectional meetings with a total of 151 villages to consult different areas and obtain a better idea of the needs and challenges within the chiefdom. The purpose of the document is to outline the People's Plan, which "represents the chiefdom's commitment to using its local knowledge and resources to develop the required resilience in maintaining zero cases. It identifies desired locally-led interventions and broad goals for its recovery process"(p. 7). Therefore, Fambul Tok made a conscious decision to transition its programmes away from discussing war-related issues in order to address more contemporary problems, particularly in relation to Ebola.

The document begins by highlighting some of the issues that arose during the Ebola period, similar to the social and economic issues outlined in the previous section. The document highlights some of the problems resulting from Ebola, including discrimination against particular individuals, social divisions and grudges, particularly between those who were attempting to prevent the epidemic and villagers who did not support or understand these programmes. Other issues were in relation to mistrust in the healthcare system, marital disputes and separations, economic disruptions such as farming and trade, school closings, the banning of traditional activities (such as society initiations, burials as well as "the tradition of handshaking"), stress and trauma, among many others (p. 11). While some of

these issues are fairly specific to the Ebola crisis, many of the problems highlighted in this list were also issues that were identified in the consultations just after the war, particularly the social and economic divisions and the loss of traditions. Many of these aspects were the premise for Fambul Tok's initial programme, which attempted to facilitate inter-personal reconciliation and restore traditions. As Fambul Tok's book states: "By reviving traditional practices that have proved effective in the past, and by empowering local leaders to provide ongoing guidance and moral support…Fambul Tok helps restore people and communities to wholeness" (p. 79. also see chapter 4 for more detail). Reframing these problems, and drawing on similar solutions demonstrates how the organisation was able to frame the consequences of Ebola similarly to the impacts of the conflict, and in so doing, extrapolate elements of their transitional justice programme and approach to address these newer public health issues. This more broadly demonstrates how the organisation's approach was not specific to the post-conflict period but rather, was itself relatively malleable and capable of addressing a wide range of issues.

In reframing the programme, much of this document continues to highlight and emphasise Fambul Tok as a 'facilitator,' rather than the dominating force of the programme:

> Fambul Tok…brings vast experience in tapping local knowledge, promoting community led processes and developing local capacity and skills for sustainability…Fambul Tok brings along good knowledge of its local communities to *facilitate* stakeholder engagement and interaction as a key element in its work. While providing *support* to community efforts and structures to manage community level related Ebola response commitments, *it provides opportunities for mentorship and guidance*' (p. 12, my emphasis).

Therefore, the organisation is emphasising communal ownership of this programme, with similar language to their original design. In outlining their initial programme, the Fambul Tok book states: "Fambul Tok follows a process of 'emergent design', drawing on local perspectives and ongoing assessment and reflection to allow the program design to emerge directly from the affected communities, then to adapt to the changing circumstances of real-world events and social change processes" (Fambul Tok book 2011, 82). Indeed, circumstances did change and as a result, the organisation was also forced to transform. The fundamental values of the organisation, particularly in relation to ownership, did not

really shift. Rather, in the face of new challenges and shifting priorities, the organisation was able to refocus *what* they sought to address, but maintain certain core components of their approach.

The new programme contents were also conceptually framed through the lenses of peace and reconciliation. As exemplified above, the document outlines the various social issues arising as a result of the epidemic. In the 'Recovery' portion there is a subheading that examines 'Community Reconciliation, Healing Peaceful Coexistence' which specifically examines the inter-personal divisions within villages in Neini chiefdom and their commitment to reconciliation and co-existence:

> In order to chart the path to a peaceful coexistence and ultimate development, members in the sections in Neini communities have identified reconciliation among community members as a very important factor in mobilising a shared vision and commitment to post-Ebola recovery efforts (p. 18).

This discourse parallels the 'need for reconciliation' discourse found in the organisation's initial framework (see chapter 4). In addition, this excerpt reaffirms the link between peaceful united relations and development. This particular discourse parallels both written and spoken narratives I observed, and heard in the follow up interviews wherein many individuals stated that their motivation for participating in Fambul Tok's programme was a hope that it would ultimately lead to further development (see chapter 5). It is perhaps not surprising then that the organisation would maintain this discourse. This is yet another example of how the organisation has extended its discourse to the post-Ebola context. Overcoming war-related grievances and inter-personal conflicts was, according to Fambul Tok, an obstacle in village development. The organisation has thus maintained the same solution and rationale for its new programme, while switching out 'post-conflict' for 'post-Ebola.'

Finally, the document outlines some of the ways in which individuals from Neini intend to resolve their issues, ultimately leading to a peaceful co-existence and, in turn, development. The first three suggest similar exercises as the post-conflict programme did:

- ‘Collectively, we should come together as community people and accept that Ebola is real…We will try to solve [problems] by truth telling, confession and seeking forgiveness
- We will solve some of these problems by pouring libations and praying for all who have died as a result of Ebola as a grand sectional or chiefdom event
- We will strive to revive traditional practices of respecting the dead only after this Ebola has gone away and we are advised to return to our normal lives’ (p. 19).

The solutions and methods of healing also mirror much of the original programme’s structure. As discussed in chapter 4, the organisation had, in part, framed the conflict as a collapse in traditional norms and values. As a result, the revival of traditions, such as pouring libations and ancestral sacrifices, were an important component for moving past war-related experiences. This solution was also mobilised in the face of Ebola. The crisis could indeed be framed as disrupting traditional and cultural norms, such as the inability to wash bodies, hold secret society meetings and come together publicly. Therefore, the issues resulting from Ebola were framed in traditional and social terms. As a result, the means of healing and reconciliation should address these issues, thereby further mirroring many aspects of Fambul Tok’s original programme.

As previously noted, this document was internally circulated amongst Fambul Tok staff and individuals from Catalyst for Peace, most notably, Ms. Hoffman. Fambul Tok staff wrote the actual document. However, the style in which the document was written, predominantly in first person plural, suggests an attempt by staff to emphasise a certain authenticity of ownership and agency of individuals from Neini chiefdom in identifying *their* own problems and *their* own solutions. For example, in the ‘Strategies to Recovery’ section, the text states: ‘We the people of Neini want to lead in our own Ebola recovery and future crisis prevention – and we have demonstrate that we can. We want to be the ones to determine our needs and goals’ (p. 16). However, as the analysis suggests, there are significant parallels between the original and current discourses and programmes. Therefore, while district staff attempt to emphasise that these are the voices of the Neini people, the writing also suggests the staff had particular ideas about how they would ultimately translate these discussions to fit within the organisational structure.

While the document covers many of the issues that arose during Ebola and in many ways acts as an outline for a 'post-Ebola reconciliation programme,' it essentially provides the new framework for Fambul Tok's longer term 'new approach', which has ultimately become what is now known as the People's Planning Process (PPP) and the establishment of Community Welfare and Mediation Committees (CWMC), now advertised on Fambul Tok's website. The People's Planning Process is:

> 'is an approach to healing, recovery and ongoing development in Sierra Leone (beyond the window of Ebola recovery) that places people and communities in the very centre and at the helm. The PPP is an inclusive community mobilization and engagement process for community welfare and development…Fambul Tok believes that communities with the lived experience have solutions to their unique problems but they just need to be organized and catalysed. A lot of emphasis is put on the longer-term work of creating channels for community voices and leadership in the design and implementation' (People's Planning Process, Fambul Tok website).

This summary illustrates how the organisation is employing similar discourses to their original programme by highlighting how the "communities are the centre" and "communities with the lived experience have solutions to their unique problems". This summary also bears similarity to some of the text in the Neini chiefdom document, suggesting that these discourses have been further translated into clean, condensed language in order to be projected internationally.

In addition, the CWMCs are made up of two representatives from each village in the section, one man and one woman. On each committee there is a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, two advisors and three auditors. They are, according to the Neini chiefdom document, supposed to "address mediation and reconciliation, as well as issues of economic recovery and development in the communities" (p. 14). On the website, this structure is explained as an "inside out approach" which "repairs the torn fabric of community and builds social immunity from any emerging crisis, whatever it may be, thus helping break an endless crisis and response cycle" (The People's Planning Process, Fambul Tok website). These committees are supposed to operate as permanent structures that are able to provide basic mediation for individuals or families in conflict.

In addition, the committees also work as an established body within a section that NGOs looking to do projects in that particular area can approach. As one staff member said to me, "This country has suffered two serious things: the war and Ebola. There has been so much help but people are not asked what they want." This is also emphasised in blog posts on the Fambul Tok website, where another staff member discusses how post-conflict projects were not sustainable and so in looking at post-Ebola projects it is necessary to think about how to create permanent structures that can aid individuals long term (Yarjoh, 2016*a*). At the time of writing in December 2016, the organisation had agreed with district council chairmen in each of the three districts where Fambul Tok had piloted these projects – Moyamba, Kailahun and Koinadugu – that the PPP would be implemented in all chiefdoms across these districts (Yarjoh, 2016*b*). Thus, implementing and overseeing these committees was the organisation's sustained solution to its 'transition troubles.'

It is worth noting that these plans and programmes were, at the time of research, in a pilot phase and still doing consultations in select sections during my December 2015 visit.[48] Therefore, it is difficult to yet know how villagers have interpreted, co-opted and/or shaped these committees and what effects, if any, these committees have had on their areas. However, judging purely from the design and structure of the programme, there is the potential for issues to arise. Firstly, villages already have well-established mediation structures through local chieftaincy systems, and as noted in chapter 5, the initial Fambul Tok programme actually encouraged participants to use these structures. Depending on how much or how little involvement particular stakeholders (such as chiefs) have, these committees have the potential to become intensely politicised and perhaps even cause conflict between particular individuals. Secondly, the structure of the committee presumes an equal power relationship between NGOs and villages. However, NGOs frequently already have an agenda or implementation plan and while the committee is supposed to (in theory) mitigate duplication, this may not necessarily be the village's

[48] I was also unable to attend any of the meetings due to the fact that I was there over the Christmas holiday and the organisation was not operating during this period.

decision, as donors often dictate what programmes will be implemented. Only time will tell what sorts of issues arise and how (or even if) such issues will be resolved.

What is, however, important to highlight is that due to the changing circumstances within Sierra Leonean rural areas – both the waning relevance of war-related discussions and the prevalence of the Ebola epidemic – the organisation sought to reframe its programme. This shift suggests that Fambul Tok was aware of some of the ways in which its programmes were being appropriated, and was willing to engage with the actual priorities and activities occurring in the areas where it worked, whilst maintaining its core values and approach. In addition, it employs similar discourses to frame how the 'problems' are manifesting (particularly in relation to social issues) and what types of 'solutions' should be enacted to manage them, illustrating the adaptability and malleability of its values and approach in the face of new issues.

Conclusion

There are numerous reasons why institutions transition. While there is literature examining the influence of donor priorities (Evans-Kent and Bleiker 2010; Whitfield and Fraser 2008) and state political transitions (Bebbington 1997; Habib and Taylor 1999), there is much less analysis on how beneficiaries push organisations to rethink their programmes. While most transitional justice institutions are only mandated to operate for a particular period of time, Fambul Tok had a more sustained outlook.

While some evidence would suggest that Sierra Leone's transition from war to peace has generally been successful (Ainley *et al.* 2015), Sierra Leoneans continue to face significant challenges, both as a result of Ebola and generally poor economic circumstances. Therefore, the organisation shifted its programme to address the ongoing adversities Sierra Leoneans continue to face. The organisation did maintain its core values and approach, which also indicates the resourcefulness of the organisation's staff and how these individuals are also creative in the ways they adapt to more contemporary

community challenges. Unfortunately, I was unable to witness these new programmes myself and thus was unable to analyse how individuals interpreted and engaged with these new programmes. What can, however, be concluded from these shifts is that the flexibility of Fambul Tok's approach is advantageous; it allows the organisation to address issues that are not post-conflict related, and this explains its longevity. Moreover, it has, over time, begun to acknowledge the economic, social and political contexts of programme participants, to which it has been willing to adapt. Flexibility and a deeper understanding acquired through long-term engagement are features that NGOs with only temporary mandates to deal with specific issues do not have. While it remains to be seen how these new programmes will be interpreted and shaped by villagers, the longer-term organisational approach may have broader implications for future post-conflict initiatives that have a more sustained outlook. Perhaps, as suggested in Fambul Tok's initial media, their *approach*, really is international (see Fambul Tok book, 2011, 33).

Conclusion

This thesis has unpacked and examined the key concept of 'localisation' in transitional justice discourse, and what it means in practice in rural Sierra Leone. In recent years, transitional justice discourses and mechanisms have evolved to more substantively engage with and incorporate local dimensions and ownership, because this is believed to make these mechanisms more legitimate and effective (Huyse 2008). Using the Sierra Leonean organisation, Fambul Tok, as a case study, this thesis has sought to interrogate some of the assumptions that frequently underpin this literature by inquiring:

1. How and why do individual Sierra Leoneans engage with Fambul Tok's programme?
2. What does the Fambul Tok case study indicate about the construction of the 'local' and notions of ownership in transitional justice?
3. What do Sierra Leonean experiences more broadly indicate about processes of post-conflict transitions and justice?

This research has concluded that transitional justice processes are not only institutional, but also individual. These processes and programmes do not simply 'happen', nor does the mere deployment of words like 'local' and 'ownership' necessarily make it "locally owned". Transitional justice processes are defined and shaped by individual agency.

The concept of the 'local' has often been broadly defined. The 'local' can refer to the nation, or elements of cultural and traditional practices, or to the antithesis of the global or international. This thesis has shown that conceptualising the 'local' in these ways is problematic because it does not necessarily account for the diverse engagements with these programmes and processes as well as the shifting needs and priorities of individuals over time. Shaw and Waldorf have suggested that by taking a place-based analytical approach, in which the 'local' is the point from which the rest of the world is viewed, provides a more "nuanced understanding of what justice, redress and social reconstruction look like" (2010, 6). Based on eight months of fieldwork in Bombali district, Sierra Leone,

this thesis has employed this as both a methodological and analytic approach, using individual perspectives and activity as the starting point of investigation. As a result of this approach, this thesis was able to illustrate the diverse ways in which individuals were involved in constructing and maintaining local transitional justice processes and programmes. In so doing, I analysed how transitional justice discourses were vernacularised into more resonant frameworks, how and why particular components of Fambul Tok's programme were appropriated by participants (and others were not), alternative modes of engagement outside the organisation's framework, how and why the organisation has more recently sought to reframe its programme, and what these findings say more broadly about notions of transition and justice.

While there has been some academic engagement and field research conducted on Fambul Tok (for example Cilliers *et al.* 2016; Friedman 2015; Stovel 2010), there have not been any comprehensive qualitative studies that have rigorously examined how individuals involved in the organisation, such as donors, the director, district staff and participants, interact. More importantly, existing research has not explored what these interactions indicate about the construction of the 'local' in transitional justice processes and programmes. By observing meetings prior to the bonfire ceremonies, the ceremonies themselves, spending time with district staff and conducting follow up interviews I was able to obtain a much more in-depth understanding of the organisation, how and why programme participants interpreted and engaged with the organisation and what the Fambul Tok case study says more broadly about how the 'local' is never quite what official programme designers predict.

The vast majority of empirical research conducted on transitional justice examines institutions or programmes, or what I have referred to as 'recognised mechanisms' – official bodies and institutions with preconceived goals and processes that are already recognised and understood as part of the transitional justice 'toolkit' (Shaw and Waldorf 2010). In Sierra Leone, this included the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme, The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission (TRC), the Reparations Programme and Fambul Tok. Fambul Tok's media distinguishes its programme from these others by projecting itself as a local grassroots initiative that does not go to villages with preconceived ideas of what a process should be, but rather, simply helps communities 'find their own answers'. Upon witnessing the programme's operation, however, I found that it does in fact have a general plan for implementation, and there is a particular sequence to the programme; therefore, it is not entirely constructed 'from below' and resembles the commonly 'recognised' mechanisms as well.

Recognised mechanisms are, in many ways, easier to examine because they often have clearly stated goals against which to measure their 'success' or 'failure'. The majority of transitional justice research does not examine alternative interpretations and engagements with these mechanisms, processes occurring outside the organisational scope, or how social structure and individual agency interact to produce particular outcomes. Being confined to these parameters has meant that research has often overlooked significant aspects of these processes and thus, transitional justice continues to be framed as something that is delivered to people by a particular institution. Therefore, this thesis moves beyond whether or not Fambul Tok's programmes were successful on their own terms (i.e. whether or not they did in fact facilitate reconciliation), and looks instead at the actual *activity* of individuals involved in these programmes and how all of these factors intersect. Examining these components illustrates the diverse ways in which participants engaged with these programmes and demonstrates that transitional justice programmes are not just institutional, but also individual. Individuals, from both the organisation and the village, ultimately dictate how these programmes are interpreted, what they become and how these programmes come to be enacted. This is not to say that programmes are not, in a sense, 'localised' by participants; the point is that this localisation does not happen in accordance with Fambul Tok's stated goals and expectations.

Analysing the activity of individual Sierra Leoneans also meant that it was necessary to look beyond the organisation's programme. Fambul Tok was not established until five

years after the official end of the conflict. The vast majority of informants in villages where Fambul Tok was operating made clear that that they were relatively uninterested or unable to access other recognised transitional justice mechanisms, such as the Special Court or Truth Commission. Therefore, they engaged in a broad range of unrecognised mechanisms – processes outside the institutional transitional justice scope and discourse – in an effort to gradually move past their war-related experiences. Analysing both recognised and unrecognised mechanisms has illustrated how transitional justice processes and programmes do not simply happen *to* or *for* people, but as a result of individuals enacting their own agency by navigating their circumstances and working within the confines of societal and structural constraints.

Chapter one provided relevant summaries and frameworks of how the 'local' and 'ownership' have, to date, been understood and integrated into the transitional justice and peacebuilding literature. The literature review illustrates that while there has in recent years been a greater recognition of the need for local participation and ownership, the literature continues to treat the 'local' as homogeneous passive recipients in need of particular programmes, rather than examining how they are active agents in both recognised and unrecognised processes and programmes. Chapter two then explains how I went about my research by employing different qualitative methods in order to examine how individuals interpreted and engaged with Fambul Tok's programme and the implications of this case study for understanding the actual 'localisation' of transitional justice.

Chapter three is a combination of both primary and secondary sources that provides background to the conflict and post-conflict-related experiences in Sierra Leone, with particular focus on Bombali district. It was divided in two parts. The first part provided a general overview of the conflict and its trajectory in Bombali district, as well as more specific discussions about individual experiences that I obtained through interviews. These individual war-related narratives served to illustrate two points: firstly, that individual war-related experiences were diverse. Some individuals went to larger towns

such as Makeni, others remained in the nearby bush for long periods of time while some actively negotiated with the rebels. Some individuals experienced direct violence while others were more impacted by the social and economic implications of the conflict, such as inability to access food or medicine. Secondly, while circumstances were indeed difficult, individuals actively employed creative ways of managing their circumstances amongst themselves and with the help of their friends and family. Examples of this creativity include how individuals built homes and found means of sustenance by collecting materials they were able to find in the bush. During periods of rebel presence, villagers would also appoint a particular person to liaise with the rebels so that the entire village would not be in danger. Therefore, individuals were not passive victims of the conflict; they were active agents in their own survival.

The second part of chapter three explored the various recognised mechanisms in Sierra Leone, particularly the Special Court and the Truth Commission, as well as relevant academic analysis of these mechanisms. At the time these mechanisms were being designed in the early 2000s, the concept of local ownership was becoming much more significant to policymakers and practitioners designing transitional justice programmes in Sierra Leone. This was in large part a response to the criticisms of transitional justice mechanisms operating in the 1990s, which were considered to be distanced from the populations for whom justice was being done (Stover and Weinstein 2004). This part of the chapter examined the ways in which institutions operating in Sierra Leone facilitated local ownership and demonstrated how architects of these mechanisms had made assumptions about how justice and reconciliation were to be facilitated, basing their designs on blueprints of previous tribunals and then incorporating what they understood to be local dimensions. For the Special Court this involved ensuring that the Court itself was situated within the boundaries of Sierra Leone, as well as incorporating national laws and employing Sierra Leoneans. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission incorporated traditional rituals in the closing ceremonies of each district. However, as has been demonstrated in the literature on both the Special Court (Anders 2012; Mieth 2013) and the TRC (Kelsall 2005; Shaw 2007; Millar 2010) as well as in my own interviews, a large

portion of Sierra Leoneans were either unable or unwilling to engage with these mechanisms. Some people, such as Sierra Leoneans who were employed by these institutions, financially benefitted. The institutions themselves, however, believed that many Sierra Leoneans were benefitting through abstract notions of justice and reconciliation. Therefore, these mechanisms largely conflated 'local' with 'national' or other specific geographic locations, and notions of culture and tradition, and benefitted individuals who had a direct connection to them. Examining these components in this chapter did two things necessary to set up the rest of the thesis. First, it laid the groundwork for demonstrating the continuity of creativity, which was discussed in order to answer research questions one and three. Individuals have long been managing their own circumstances. The second purpose of this chapter was to situate the gap Fambul Tok was attempting to fill in addressing the needs of people in rural areas, and explored how and why the founder, John Caulker, was able to construct a narrative expressing a greater need for local ownership in processes aiding post-conflict Sierra Leone, a component of research question two.

The fourth chapter then turned to the organisation's discourses and how they frame the 'local' and notions of ownership, thereby predominantly focusing on research question two. The chapter first provided background and a framework of the organisation before conducting a discourse analysis of its media. I then contrasted these narratives to some of my own fieldwork observations in order to disaggregate who and what the 'local' is in the context of this research, and how ownership occurs in practice. The organisation itself is made up of Sierra Leoneans who work in six Sierra Leoneans districts. The organisation also stresses the centrality of the programme being owned by the participants and "walking with communities to find their own answers". However, their media demonstrates how, like other transitional justice mechanisms, they too, largely equate local with national, or Sierra Leonean, as well as notions of culture and tradition. Both their book and documentary DVD illustrate how a key component of moving past war-related experiences is mobilising cultural practices and restoring traditions. However, the organisation does not really question whether restoring certain traditional or cultural

practices is in fact needed or desired. Therefore, the programme itself is based on significant assumptions of what is needed to move past war-related experiences and how such a programme should be facilitated. This demonstrates how the notion of ownership is conceived and facilitated by the organisation as a 'buy in' (Chesterman 2007) to the general programme structure, as opposed to villagers designing and structuring a programme themselves. Further, this also illustrates that while the organisation distinguishes itself from other transitional justice mechanisms by being more 'in touch' with Sierra Leonean needs and priorities, it can still be regarded as a recognised mechanism for three reasons: first, it engages with the global discourses of the 'local', transitional justice and reconciliation. Second, it is practically reliant on external funding and thus interacts and is influenced by external, as well as internal forces. Third, the organisation has a structured programme with stated goals and values that are replicated across all districts. Thus, Fambul Tok is not really unique, but is *itself* 'buying-in' to the global discourses on locality and ownership. It is very much part of the broader transitional justice scope and discourse.

The second half of the fourth chapter disaggregated various interactions between individuals – such as the director, district staff and participants – involved in the programme and what these interactions say about notions of the 'local' and 'ownership' in practice. Dynamics between these individuals are constantly shifting. A key example of this is how Fambul Tok staff act as translators (Merry 2006), vernacularising (Merry and Levitt 2009) global discourses about justice and reconciliation into frames of moral behaviour, thereby implying that their beneficiaries are both the problem and the solution to their issues (Englund 2006). While these individuals are all Sierra Leonean, they are still *individuals*; not everyone shares the same backgrounds, has an equal capacity to access resources or necessarily has the same values and priorities. Therefore, the 'local' cannot be understood as a particular type of individual, such as Sierra Leonean, nor can it be solely defined by cultural and traditional practices. Thus, this research, and more specifically research question two, suggests that a greater interrogation of the 'local' is needed in the literature because the ways in which these programmes and discourses

(whether or not they are labelled as local) are interpreted, enacted and owned is diverse. It is necessary to explore the actual activity of different individuals in relation to Fambul Tok's programmes in order to gain a better understanding of how agency is employed so that these programmes can be enacted on *their own* terms.

Chapter five thus analysed the ways in which Fambul Tok was interpreted and appropriated by individuals in the areas where they work and how social structures, individuals and the organisation interact with each other. This examination sought to answer research question one. The structure of Fambul Tok's programme – from the initial meetings to the bonfire ceremony to the programmes occurring after – largely remained the same in each area I observed. However, the ways in which individuals interpreted and appropriated these programmes was much more diverse. My data suggests that the vast majority of individuals did not desire or particularly enjoy discussing or hearing about war-related experiences, but rather hoped that participating in this part of the programme might stimulate further development, as well as provide an opportunity to address other, more contemporary issues. For example, individuals from Makulon and Gbintimaria capitalised on the programme's events in an effort to begin resolving an enduring chieftaincy conflict that evidently had more impact on their everyday lives than the civil conflict that officially ended over a decade ago. Other individuals engaged with different components of the programme for monetary gain, such as women who sold their goods during the bonfire ceremony or the *sampas* who danced to receive "small money". These types of engagements did not necessarily align with the stated purpose of the programme. In fact, the organisation very clearly communicated that it "does not give money". Individuals, however, found means of making money through these programmes anyway, because this was *their* most immediate priority. Thus, while the organisation had a particular blueprint of its programme and individuals, in theory, bought into the programme, they were also active agents in how they interpreted and benefited from it. Further, how individuals engaged with these programmes and interpreted Fambul Tok's messages also suggested that their current needs and priorities were unrelated to the civil conflict. Sierra Leoneans were more interested in enacting activities that aided and

sustained their current everyday livelihoods. This research more broadly indicates that creativity is not specific to a particular period (such as conflict or post-conflict) but rather that it is an embedded ability that helps individuals manage their often-difficult circumstances and work within their social and economic constraints.

In addition, both chapters four and five emphasised the practice of 'appropriation'. Chapter four examined how Fambul Tok staff appropriated and vernacularised particular discourses relating to concepts like 'transitional justice' and 'reconciliation'. Chapter five analysed how and why individual Sierra Leoneans appropriated certain aspects of Fambul Tok's programmes. These different engagements ultimately demonstrate how such mechanisms do not have one particular owner, nor can the 'local' be equated with a particular category: Fambul Tok's programme was *owned* by multiple Sierra Leoneans, both staff and villagers, simultaneously, but in different ways. Interactions between individual staff and participants also ultimately shaped the various outcomes. The 'local' and ownership can then be partially understood as the individual engagement, or activity, of these processes and programmes. However, in order to *fully* understand how processes of transition and justice occur, it is also necessary to examine individual activity outside of the official transitional justice scope and discourse.

Chapter six thus examined many of the unrecognised mechanisms employed by Sierra Leoneans who were unable or unwilling to engage with recognised mechanisms, which pertains to research question three. Most transitional justice literature frames transitions as movement from authoritarian regimes to democratic regimes and/or from conflicts to peace. Transitional justice mechanisms, along with a whole host of other post-conflict programmes, attempt to aid societies in these transitions. This notion of transition, however, assumes a linear movement from a state of conflict to a state of peace. Transitions are not linear, but rather diverse and occur in multiple temporalities. Significant experiences, such as those that occur during a conflict, become an embedded part of the individual. The degree to which individuals move past their experiences and the modes of engagement in managing them substantially vary. It is, therefore, unrealistic

to think that there is such a thing as a 'completed' transition, as much of the literature seems to suggest. What is, however, critical to highlight is that it is not the global discourse or mechanisms that define goals or facilitate transitions and justice. Rather it is *individual agency*. In Sierra Leone, individuals engaged in everyday activities such as economic restoration, agriculture and religion in an effort to transition to a 'new normal.' The importance of the everyday and re-obtaining a sense of normality were main priorities for many of the Sierra Leoneans with whom I spoke. Therefore, individuals define and enact their own ideas of what it means to transition. This further demonstrates how mechanisms do not necessarily have to be referred to as 'transitional justice' to provide individuals with some sense of justice. In fact, recognised mechanisms often contribute neither to transitions nor to a sense of justice for individuals. Individuals engage with alternative, often more immediate and meaningful, channels within their existing social structures in order to reach their own defined goals. The very act of restoring their own livelihoods was critical for coping with war-related experiences. Individuals are, therefore, active agents in enacting their own sense of justice. It is, thus, necessary to look beyond the impact and effectiveness of recognised mechanisms so frequently highlighted in transitional justice literature and observe how individuals *actually engage* with their surroundings to better understand how they manage and move past their individual war-related experiences.

As a result of these individual engagements and shifting priorities, organisations designed to help individuals cope with war-related experiences are themselves also forced to transition and find new modes of engagement. During my initial fieldwork in 2014, twelve years after the official end date of the conflict, Fambul Tok's staff were becoming aware that individuals were no longer interested in discussing the conflict and that their needs had largely shifted away from these issues. As a result, Fambul Tok sought to re-focus its programme. The Ebola epidemic provided a temporary lens through which to reframe its work. Ultimately, though, the organisation's programme shifted to engage with longer-term sustainable development. Fambul Tok has managed to maintain its initial approach and values but has shifted the actual focus of its programme to more

contemporary issues, by facilitating committees that can solve communal issues and act as a liaising group between the section and NGOs. Chapter seven demonstrates that the organisation's participants and their priorities were driving forces in the organisation's transition. Therefore, it is not only individuals, but also transitional justice institutions can also become the subjects of transition.

The dynamics occurring within both recognised and unrecognised transitional justice programmes and processes are complex. This thesis goes beyond concluding that recognised transitional justice mechanisms are distanced: they are also *privileged*, both conceptually and in practice. As illustrated in chapter four, transitional justice discourses were vernacularised, demonstrating how such concepts are not necessarily inherent to their respective audiences. Anthropologists like Rosalind Shaw (2007) and Tim Kelsall (2005) have previously illustrated how speaking publicly at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not necessarily aid Sierra Leoneans in moving past their war-related experiences. Shaw argues that Sierra Leoneans engaged in non-discursive means of social forgetting. Therefore, the ways in which institutional architects understood individual Sierra Leonean needs did not align with their targeted participants. To understand and appreciate how the Special Court delivered justice or why the TRC facilitated reconciliation, one must first understand and value the foundational assumptions about justice and reconciliation that underpin these mechanisms. If one does not value speaking publicly as cathartic, then it will not facilitate reconciliation. Similarly, one needs to have a pre-established recognition of obtaining justice through legal mechanisms. Justice is not facilitated if the mechanism through which it is enacted is not understood or relevant. Therefore, one must be of a particular education and background to conceptually connect with these notions of justice and reconciliation.

Further, many individuals were unable to physically gain access to these mechanisms. While both the Truth Commission and Special Court had offices in most district capitals and did conduct outreach activities in some rural areas, the vast majority of individuals would not necessarily have the money or time to physically go and engage with these

processes. As highlighted in chapter three, many Sierra Leoneans were unable or unwilling to access the Truth Commission and the Special Court. In practice, though, individuals had more pressing priorities, and thus transitioning to a 'new normal' was more relevant to many people than gaining access to recognised mechanisms that did not have a direct impact on their immediate needs, such as assisting in physical reconstruction or restoring social bonds. Therefore, transitional justice, both conceptually and practically, is the territory of a particular group which understands how these mechanisms facilitate justice, reconciliation and contribute to broader transitions. People who understand why these processes and programmes are necessary facilitate these mechanisms. To transitional justice practitioners, they *are enacting* justice and reconciliation because this is the lens through which they understand it. In sum, while it is well established in the literature that recognised mechanisms are often distanced from individuals for whom justice is being done, there is very little analysis of how individuals who do not engage with these programmes understand, own and *enact* their own versions of justice and reconciliation.

This thesis serves to illustrate how concepts like the 'local' and 'ownership' are not fixed. Rather, these concepts are the subject of constant shifts and contestations. Engaging a place-based methodological and analytic approach demonstrates how local transitional justice is best understood through the lens of *individual activity*, in relation to both recognised and unrecognised mechanisms. Some of the individual engagements with Fambul Tok's programmes illustrated the sustained creativity that was employed to appropriate certain aspects of its programmes. Whether or not it is realised, these engagements with recognised transitional justice mechanisms are constantly shaping and re-shaping transitional justice processes. Therefore, examining the activity of individuals illustrates the diversity and ownership of these processes and how justice is not enacted for someone: in order to align with individual values and priorities, justice is *an act* in and of itself. In Sierra Leone, individuals prioritised their everyday needs and livelihoods because *this is how justice was understood and activated*. Therefore, individual Sierra Leoneans were active agents in obtaining their own sense of transition and justice.

Transitional justice discourse and practice then needs to move beyond simply recognising the need to incorporate local dimensions and ownership as they understand these concepts, and begin to recognise that active agency is critical to facilitating justice. It is only through the process of individuals activating their own forms of justice – as opposed to recognised mechanisms "delivering" justice – that transition can be *fully* realised.

Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Participant List

Part I: 2013-2014 Fieldwork

Group 1: Non-Fambul Tok Communities

Bumban Section, Biriwa Chiefdom

Bumban Town

1. **KC (**M) Youth leader for 23 years and became regent section chief in 2013
2. **BC** (M) town chief
3. **AK***a* (M)[49]
4. **SS** (M)
5. **JB** (M) youth leader
6. **AS** (M)
7. **ABK** (M) community teacher, youth
8. **FC** (M) (likely section chief-to-be)
9. **PS** (M)
10. **SF** (M) Kakendema (Kamabai section), headmaster at school
11. **NK** (F) Mammy Queen
12. **MC** (F) widowed
13. **AM** (M) youth, from Kathombo, admin officer for Bumban HS
14. **GSC** (M)
15. **PKK** (M) teacher
16. **MK** (F)
17. **TC (**F)
18. **AK***b* (F) youth (23), lives away but from village

[49] Note that if there is nothing specific next to their name, they worked in agriculture

19. **FK** (F) shop keeper

Kadama

20. **OM** (M)
21. **IM** (M) youth
22. **MMM**(F/M)- M. is blind so interviewed her and her husband together

Kathanta (actually in Kamabai section, but was strategically the first village off the main high way before you reached Bumban section).

23. **KK** (M)- town chief
24. **SK** (M) amputee living in Panlap amputee camp
25. **YK** (F) living in Panlap amputee camp.

Karina Section, Biriwa Chiefdom

Karina

26. **BF** (M)
27. **DB**(M) Head Teacher
28. **LF** (M)- town chief Muslim, Madingo, 3 wives, 6 children
29. **MF** (M) youth leader
30. **SK** (M) former town chief.
31. **AFMK** (M) Imam
32. **KK***a* (M)
33. **TM** (M)
34. **MS***a* (M) former child soldier
35. **MS***b* (M) former AFRC leader
36. **FF***a* (F) Chairlady Karina
37. **KK***b* (F)
38. **MS***c* (M)

Mayamgbo

39. **MC** (F)
40. **BK** (F)
41. **MK** (F) Mammy Queen
42. **FF***b* (F)
43. **KK***c* (F)
44. **SC** (M)

Group 2: Fambul Tok Communities with bonfire ceremonies

Makomray Section, Gbanti Kamaranka Chiefdom

Makomray

45. **AD** (M) Section chief, Teacher
46. **LK** (M) town chief
47. **AK***a* (M) youth leader
48. **AS** (M) youth
49. **MK***a* (F)
50. **AK***b* (F) youth (SS1), daughter of the PC
51. **AK***c* (M) from Kuthnia, a few villages over
52. **SK** (M)- youth
53. **AK***d* (M)
54. **JF** (M)- gov. representative to the Chiefdom
55. **AK***e* (M)
56. **AK***f* (M) youth
57. **BB** (F) Mammy Queen
58. **FB** (F)
59. **BK** (F)
60. **MT** (F)
61. **MK***b* (M)
62. **YB** (F) widow
63. **SD** (M)
64. **ML** (M)

Makulon Section Gbanti Kamaranka Chiefdom

Gbintimaria

65. **AD** (M) section chief
66. **AARK** (M) Imam
67. **BK** (M) youth
68. **SK***a* (M) youth
69. **KT***a* (F) Trader (from Makulon)
70. **FS** (M) youth
71. **KT***b* (F)
72. **MK** (F)
73. **FK** (F)
74. **HB** (F) Chairlady
75. **SK***b* (M)
76. **JK** (M)
77. **AK***a* (M)

Makulon

78. **JSC** (M) teacher
79. **AK***b* (F) Mammy Queen, Birth attendant
80. **AK***c* (M) farmer
81. **SM** (M) teacher

Gbintimaria

82. **AK***d* (M) youth leader
83. **MB** (F)
84. **WK** (M) community Teacher
85. **SK***c* (M) adviser to chairman

Makulon

86. **AF** (M) Town headman
87. **SK***c* (M) Pastor and teacher

Group 3: Community where Fambul Tok had been operating since 2011

Benia Section, Sanda Loko Chiefdom

Mayelie

88. **ST***a* (M) town chief
89. **ST***b* (M)
90. **AK***a* (F)
91. **AD** (M) student (youth)
92. **UT** (M) Youth leader
93. **ST***c* (M) youth
94. **KD** (F) chairlady of PM
95. **TT** (M)
96. **KC** (M) ceremonial chief

Maron

97. **ALK** (M) town chief/secretary general of FT
98. **LD** (M)
99. **AC***a* (F)
100. **ZS** (F) chair lady of Maron
101. **AC***b* (F) Imam and Miner

Mayelie

102. **FC** (M)
103. **AB** (M)
104. **BC** (M)
105. **SC** (M)
106. **AK***b* (F)
107. **MS** (F)
108. **ZK** (F)
109. **YK** (F) widow

Group 4: Organisational Interviews

110. Usman Fornah, head of the TRC in the Northern Region
111. Joseph Kargbo, Bombali District staff manager, Fambul Tok
112. John Ditto Kamara, Deputy District Chairman

113. Simeon Koroma, founder and executive director of Timap for Justice
114. Katie Campbell, Special Assistant to Registrar SCSL
115. Sara Waldheim, Fambul Tok volunteer
116. Libby Hoffman, Executive Director of Catalyst for Peace
117. Former Fambul Tok Board Member (Anonymous)
118. Former Fambul Tok Employee (Anonymous)
119. Bombali District Manager of NaCSA (Anonymous)
120. Local Government employee (in relation to chieftaincy) (Anonymous)

Pt. II: 2015-2016 Fieldwork

Pate Bana Marank, Bombali Serbora Chiefdom[50]

1. **JDB** (m) contact tracer
2. **IK** (m) Ebola survivor
3. **YK** (f) Ebola survivor
4. **SK** (m) Ebola survivor, chairman of survivors committee
5. **JK** (m)
6. **PKF** (m) ceremonial chief
7. **OK** (m) Ebola survivor, Imam
8. **MK***a* (f)
9. **UK** (f)
10. **MK***b* (f)

Bumban, Biriwa Chiefdom

11. **AP** (f) Mammy Queen
12. **MS** (f)
13. **SP** (f)
14. **KK** (f)
15. **NK** (f)
16. **KC***a* (m) traditional healer
17. **YC** (m) Elders council chief
18. **KC***b* (m) Section chief
19. **AM** (m) Teacher, contact tracer
20. **ST** (m) Town chief

[50] Please note that I conducted interviews in this particular town because it was severely impacted by Ebola

Mayelie, Sanda Loko Chiefdom

21. **ST** (m) section chief
22. **AB** (m)
23. **YC** (f)
24. **FK** (f)
25. **AK** (f)
26. **MC** (f)
27. **AB** (f)
28. **TT** (m)
29. **AC** (m)
30. **ST** (m)

Gbintimaria, Gbani Kamaranka Chiefdom

31. **AD** (m) Section chief
32. **AARK** (m) Imam
33. **NAK** (m)
34. **KT***a* (f)
35. **AK***a* (f)
36. **FR** (f)
37. **AK***b* (f)
38. **WK** (m) teacher
39. **SK** (m) advisor to chairman
40. **KT** (m) contact tracer

Organisational Interviews

41. Simeon Koroma, Timap for Justice
42. Stella, Timap for Justice- Makeni
43. Samson, Timap for Justice- Binkolo
44. Albert, CARE employee
45. James Turay, Regional Human Rights Officer
46. Rev. Doctor Usman Fornah, Wesleyan Church (former head of TRC)
47. Mansu Mansaray, head of Rescue Sierra Leone
48. Ibramhim Kanu, District Manager Red Cross
49. Samuel, Assistant Health Programme Manager for Bomali, GOAL
50. Sorie Conteh, District Surveillance Officer
51. Joseph Kargbo, District manager Fambul Tok
52. Doctor Suma and Nurse Erica Sesay, Government hospital employees (interviewed together)

Appendix B: Sample Excerpt from Field notes

Makomray: Day of Bonfire

- Woke up and wandered around some- it seems like a pretty normal day ->people cooking and children getting ready for school. Nothing 'out of the ordinary.'
- On Chieftaincy Politics: Joseph introduced me to the Paramount chief. He is a relatively young and became chief in 2010 in Gbanti Kamaranka (two chiefdoms combined in 1947). He explained a bit about chieftaincy elections. A council of elders elects them (over 400 in this chiefdom) and 1000 in others. Comprised of elders in various sections. Section chiefs are voted in by same elders in their sections and then appointed. Chiefdom powers have significantly diminished but he is saying he has minerals (gold and diamonds in Makulon) which he is currently digging for and attempting to attract investment.
- A man named Turay came and said he was coming to the bonfire and asked about the FT program.
- Joseph explained about the respect for elders (fear) means they also fear God and this fear leads to good behavior. This respect is important for society. Many divisions->political and tribal are getting stronger and people do not necessarily have voices.
- People are supposed to give contributions for cooking. Bessie is in charge and has been collecting but the contributions have been low. In the afternoon we are meeting with a few of the chairladies to discuss the materials they still need to get.
- People are not contributing rice. The PC is very annoyed. He walked away to go into someone's house to contribution (one village did not want to contribute). They came back about 20 minutes later and discussed ingredients and cost for the ceremony tonight. Balance came to Le 528,000 and they were given Le 700,000. Money was given and counted in front the group to demonstrate transparency. Bessie is on the Reconciliation Committee and Woman's leader (Mammy Queen) is the sister of the PC.
- Wandered in the afternoon and talked to some youth in the community. Said contemporary issues were primarily domestic issues and land issues (section chief said the same thing). He said after school he often has to settle these disputes. The youth were not aware of the bonfire (one asked me how much it cost to go). Youth leader's job is to help organize programs and football matches. They said there is also a farmer's co-op in the community but no groups for women.

- Bonfire Prep: The women have been prepping with the women who are cooking for the bonfire. Conversations seem to be about general community happenings. Discussing an ill women who should not be out. One woman is upset with her son because he did not pound the rice so he will not receive dinner. The women are primarily older. They used megaphone to announce help was needed for the cooking.
- My presence is prevalent→laughing at my dancing. They are certainly aware I am here. Mood is generally happy, started singing and dancing, drums came. Cassava is chopped very, very fine. Goat tried to steal cassava. Asked if I was married. One woman said she had 3 sons, I could choose from. Drumming continues.
- Some issues starting the bonfire. The location had to be moved, people were slow coming. The section chief is relatively new and Joseph demanded he take control and get organized. Joseph was very unhappy with his command.

Appendix C: Research Plan and Questionnaire Provided to Fambul Tok

Research Summary

This research seeks to examine post-conflict justice and reconciliation in rural Sierra Leone with particular focus on the role of Fambul Tok International to understand their precise contributions to these communities and overall impact of their intervention.

More broadly, I will be examining how rural community structures in Bombali have evolved in spite of and as a result of the war. Firstly, I will be thinking about which components helped communities come together just after the war, notions about justice and reconciliation and opinions on transitional justice institutions such as the Special Court and TRC. Secondly, I will be considering contemporary issues and structures such as chiefdom politics and the changing role of chiefs, dynamics between youths and elders and dispute resolution mechanisms to obtain a comprehensive overview of communities themselves and how they have changed over time. By understanding these components I will better gauge the extent of Fambul Tok's contributions and where exactly their greatest impacts and legacies lie within these communities. Therefore, questions will pertain to Fambul Tok activities, themes within transitional justice and reconciliation and contemporary community structures and politics.

To date, my research would suggest that the organizational promotion of tradition serves as an umbrella, particularly during the bonfire ceremony, for cross-generational unity and in this respect could serve as a catalyst for peacebuilding between these often disconnected groups. In other words, it helps to create a space where people do come together under common legacies and traditions. In addition, I think the organization also serves to promote female empowerment from the very initial stages of planning the bonfire up through the creation and maintenance of Peace Mother Groups. These structures, as demonstrated by discussion at the monthly meeting, have begun to create appeal to other external NGOs or organizations which could in turn provide further empowerment and opportunities. Therefore, this structure has the potential to become extremely important for the future of females in these communities. A final point (which I need to tease out a

bit more) is that Fambul Tok often works in areas where few, if any, other NGOs work, e.g. often in peripheral areas that have very little connection to local governance, let alone national governance. Therefore, they provide a sense of social inclusion to otherwise disconnected areas. However, these are hypotheses I am still investigating and will be able to write in fuller detail after these interviews are completed.

Research Plan

I will be working solely in Bombali district. I plan to conduct interviews in 3 categories with 2 sections in each category. Below, I will provide a questionnaire for each section.

Communities with Fambul Tok

These sections have had Fambul Tok for 2-3 years in the district and thus have incorporated their programs and mechanisms into community structures and daily interaction. I would like to work and conduct interviews in the following sections:

Masabong section, Paki Masabong chiefdom

Kania section, Sanda Loko chiefdom

Communities just beginning to work with Fambul Tok

These sections have recently started working with Fambul Tok but have not yet embarked on further activities. Therefore, I would like to speak to people in these communities about their experiences during the bonfire, particularly the planning and participation of females, confessors and observers. I would like to conduct these interviews in the following sections:

Makomray section, Gbanti Kamaranka chiefdom

Makulon section, Gbanti Kamaranka chiefdom

Communities without Fambul Tok

These are communities who have not worked with Fambul Tok. In this case I will be conducting these interviews in **Biriwa chiefdom**, namely:

Bumban section

Karina section

*Please note that in reference to communities I have not yet been to (mainly in the 1st and 3rd categories), I plan to spend time with the people and in the villages before I begin conducting interviews.

Questionnaires

Communities with Fambul Tok

War and Post-war

1. To begin, please tell me a little bit about yourself (religion, family, occupation, etc.)

2. How long have you been in the village?

3. (If applicable) Can you tell me a bit about what happened to the community/village during the war? If you are comfortable discussing your own experience you may, but if not that is okay too.

4. (If applicable) At what time did people begin to return to the community/village? Was there conflict or any divide after the war? What were some of the issues? (Examples).

5. Did you personally have any problems as a result of the war (i.e. Did you feel angry at anyone, did anyone take over your land, were you aggrieved that people left?)

6. Did anything in the community change after the war (in particular, if there were organizations that formed)? If so what are they and how do they operate?

7. If there were divides, what sorts of things helped people overcome those divides? What kinds of things helped them to come together? Specifically, are there traditional mechanisms that were used in the community?

8. Were there external institutions/NGOs that assisted the community?

9. Have you heard of the Special Court for Sierra Leone? If yes, where did you hear about it and what are your thoughts about it? Did/does it have any impact on you and your daily life?

10. Have you heard of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? If yes, where did you hear about it and what are your thoughts on it? Did/does it have any impact on you and your daily life?

11. How do you understand the concept of justice? What does that look like?

12. How do you understand the concept of reconciliation? What does that look like?

Fambul Tok

13. Please tell me a bit about your experiences with Fambul Tok. When did the come and how did they approach you?

14. Tell me a bit about the planning for the bonfire ceremony. Did you participate in this process? Were there any issues or palavas in the process? How were they resolved?

15. Tell me a bit about the ceremony itself, what did you like/anything you disliked?

16. (If attended) Did you participate in the confessions? If yes, how did it feel to discuss these issues? If no, what did you think of witnessing/hearing these stories?

17. How has Fambul Tok helped your community to come together? Which programs have contributed to this? How do you see people coming together?

18. How is Fambul Tok different from other NGOs that come to the village? What do you like or dislike about their approach?

19. Which Fambul Tok programs are in your community?

20. Is the Reconciliation Committee still working? If so, how does it work and what kinds of disputes are being settled?

21. Is there a Peace Mother's Group here? What types of activities do they/you do? How exactly do these activities work?

22. Do the Peace Mother's do anything else in the community besides a trade? Do they help settle disputes?

23. (If Peace Mother) How has this group changed the community? How has it benefited you as an individual?

24. (If Peace Mother) Has being a part of this group made you feel stronger? Has the group provided you with personal confidence? If so, how?

25. (If Peace Mother) What kinds of things do you discuss while you work on these projects? How does it make you feel to have these discussions?

26. (If Peace Mother) How is this group different from other groups in the community?

27. (If Peace Mother) Does the group have goals for the future?

28. (If other community member) What are your thoughts on the Peace Mothers? How do you see the group? What is good and bad about the group?

29. (If non-member female) Why are you not a part of the group?

30. (If male) What do you think of the women having such a group? Has it caused any troubles for the men in the community?

29. How is Peace Mother's different from other groups in the community?

30. Do you feel that you/the community is in charge of these Fambul Tok programs? If so, how?

<u>Contemporary Community Issues</u>

31. Can you tell me a bit about some of the contemporary issues in the community?

32. Are there still issues that are war-related? If yes, what are they? If no, at what point did these problems begin to subside/die down?

33. Do people still discuss the war? If so, in what context?

34. In relation to some of the other issues (based on question 31), how are these issues resolved when they arise? Explain about the arbitration system.

35. How has the chieftaincy system changed since the war? Is this good or bad?

36. Are there any current political issues in the section/chiefdom in relation to chiefs?

37. Are there any disputes between, for example, ruling families and elected persons?

38. How do you see the dynamics between the youths and elders?

39. (If youth) How do you see the elders/chiefs?

40. (If elder/chief) How do you see the youths in the community?

41. Do you see a way forward to bridge this gap?

42. Are you ever concerned there will be another war? Why or why not?

Communities just beginning with Fambul Tok

War and Post-war

1. To begin, please tell me a little bit about yourself (religion, family, occupation, etc.)

2. How long have you been in the village?

3. (If applicable) Can you tell me a bit about what happened to the community/village during the war? If you are comfortable discussing your own experience you may, but if not that is okay too.

4. (If applicable) At what time did people begin to return to the community/village? Was there conflict or any divide after the war? What were some of the issues? (Examples).

5. Did you personally have any problems as a result of the war (i.e. Did you feel angry at anyone, did anyone take over your land, were you aggrieved that people left?)

6. Did anything in the community change after the war (in particular, if there were organizations that formed)? If so what are they and how do they operate?

7. If there were divides, what sorts of things helped people overcome those divides? What kinds of things helped them to come together?

8. Were there external institutions/NGOs that assisted the community?

9. Have you heard of the Special Court for Sierra Leone? If yes, where did you hear about it and what are your thoughts about it? Did/does it have any impact on you and your daily life?

10. Have you heard of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? If yes, where did you hear about it and what are your thoughts on it? Did/does it have any impact on you and your daily life?

11. How do you understand the concept of justice? What does that look like?

12. How do you understand the concept of reconciliation? What does that look like?

Fambul Tok

13. Please tell me a bit about your experiences with Fambul Tok. When did the come and how did they approach you?

14. Tell me a bit about the planning for the bonfire ceremony. Did you participate in this process? Were there any issues or palavas in the process? How were they resolved?

15. Tell me a bit about the ceremony itself, what did you like/anything you disliked?

16. (If attended) Did you participate in the confessions? If yes, how did it feel to discuss these issues? If no, what did you think of witnessing/hearing these stories?

17. How has Fambul Tok helped your community to come together? What has contributed to this? How do you see people coming together?

18. How is Fambul Tok different from other NGOs that come to the village? What do you like or dislike about their approach?

Contemporary Community Issues

19. Can you tell me a bit about some of the contemporary issues in the community?

20. Are there still issues that are war-related? If yes, what are they? If no, at what point did these problems begin to subside/die down?

21. Do people still discuss the war? If so, in what context?

22. In relation to some of the other issues (based on question 31), how are these issues resolved when they arise? Explain about the arbitration system.

23. How has the chieftaincy system changed since the war? Is this good or bad?

24. Are there any current political issues in the section/chiefdom in relation to chiefs?

25. Are there any disputes between, for example, ruling families and elected persons?

26. How do you see the dynamics between the youths and elders?

27. (If youth) How do you see the elders/chiefs?

28. (If elder/chief) How do you see the youths in the community?

29. Do you see a way forward to bridge this gap?

30. Are you ever concerned there will be another war? Why or why not?

Communities without Fambul Tok

War and Post-war

1. To begin, please tell me a little bit about yourself (religion, family, occupation, etc.)

2. How long have you been in the village?

3. (If applicable) Can you tell me a bit about what happened to the community/village during the war? If you are comfortable discussing your own experience you may, but if not that is okay too.

4. (If applicable) At what time did people begin to return to the community/village? Was there conflict or any divide after the war? What were some of the issues? (Examples).

5. Did you personally have any problems as a result of the war (i.e. Did you feel angry at anyone, did anyone take over your land, were you aggrieved that people left?)

6. Did anything in the community change after the war (in particular, if there were organizations that formed)? If so what are they and how do they operate?

7. If there were divides, what sorts of things helped people overcome those divides? What kinds of things helped them to come together?

8. Were there external institutions/NGOs that assisted the community?

9. Have you heard of the Special Court for Sierra Leone? If yes, where did you hear about it and what are your thoughts about it? Did/does it have any impact on you and your daily life?

10. Have you heard of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? If yes, where did you hear about it and what are your thoughts on it? Did/does it have any impact on you and your daily life?

11. How do you understand the concept of justice? What does that look like?

12. How do you understand the concept of reconciliation? What does that look like?

Fambul Tok

13. Have you ever heard of the organization Fambul Tok? If so, from where and what did you hear?

14. What is it you think they do in communities?

15. Would you welcome them in your community?

16. Do you have other NGOs in this community? What is it they do?

17. What are your thoughts on these organizations and what is their impact (if any) in the community?

Contemporary Community Issues

18. Can you tell me a bit about some of the contemporary issues in the community?

19. Are there still issues that are war-related? If yes, what are they? If no, at what point did these problems begin to subside/die down?

20. Do people still discuss the war? If so, in what context?

21. In relation to some of the other issues (based on question 31), how are these issues resolved when they arise? Explain about the arbitration system.

22. How has the chieftaincy system changed since the war? Is this good or bad?

23. Are there any current political issues in the section/chiefdom in relation to chiefs?

24. Are there any disputes between, for example, ruling families and elected persons?

25. How do you see the dynamics between the youths and elders?

26. (If youth) How do you see the elders/chiefs?

27. (If elder/chief) How do you see the youths in the community?

28. Do you see a way forward to bridge this gap?

29. Are you ever concerned there will be another war? Why or why not?

Appendix D: Ethics Form

University of Edinburgh
School of Social and Political Studies
RESEARCH AND RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ethical review form for level 2 and level 3 auditing

This form should be used for any research projects carried out under the auspices of SSPS that have been identified by self-audit as requiring detailed assessment - i.e. level 2 and level 3 projects (see http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/ethics). This form provides general School-wide provisions. Proposers should feel free to supplement these with detailed provisions that may be stipulated by research collaborators (e.g. NHS) or professional bodies (e.g. BSA, SRA). The signed and completed form should be submitted, along with a copy of the research proposal (or a description of the research goals and methodology where this is unavailable) to the relevant person:

- For staff applying for external funding, the PI should submit the form to Research Office
- For Postdoctoral Fellows, the Mentor should submit the form to Research Office
- For PG Research (PhD or MSc by Research), the Supervisor should submit the form to Director of the Graduate School.
- For UG Dissertations, the Supervisor should submit the form to the Programme/Dissertation Convenor.

Research and Research Ethics Committee will monitor level 2 proposals to satisfy themselves that the School Ethics Policy and Procedures are being complied with. They will revert to proposers in cases where there may be particular concerns of queries. For level 3 audits, work should not proceed until Research and Research Ethics Committee (or the Director of Graduate Studies, in the case of postdoctoral research) has considered the issues raised. Level 3 applications should be submitted well in advance of a required date of approval.
Research Office may monitor the implementation of arrangements for dealing with ethical issues through the lifetime of research projects. Please ensure you keep a

record of how you are addressing ethics issues in the course of your research (e.g. consent forms, disclosure processes, storage of data, discussion of ethical issues by project advisory board). Do contact the Research Administrator if any unanticipated ethics issues arise in the course of your research/after the completion of your project.

SECTION 1: PROJECT DETAILS

1.1 Title of Project

Examining how a local Sierra Leonean organization facilitates reconciliation in rural communities through local ownership and ideas.

1.2 Principal Investigator, and any Co-Investigator(s) (Please provide details of Name, Institution, Email and Telephone)

Laura Martin
Department of African Studies, University of Edinburgh
Primary Supervisor: Gerhard Anders
Secondary Supervisor: Andy Aitchison
S1260530@sms.ed.ac.uk
07934773828

1.4 Does the sponsor require formal prior ethical review?
YES NO X
If yes, by what date is a response required

1.5 Does the project require the approval of any other institution and/or ethics committee? YES □ NO X

If YES, give details and indicate the status of the application at each other institution or ethics committee (i.e. submitted, approved, deferred, rejected).

1.6 This project has been assessed using this checklist and is judged to be
LEVEL2 (for information to Research Ethics Committee) X

LEVEL 3 □ (for discussion by Research Ethics Committee)

1.7 If Level 3, is there a date by which a response from the committee is required?

Name: Laura S. Martin Signature

PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL (OR ALTERNATIVELY A DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH)

This is for Ph.D Research and a copy of the introduction and research questions, along with the research methods portions are attached to this form. I am having my transition board on December 2, 2013.

SECTION 2: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

2.1 Is it likely that the research will induce any psychological stress or discomfort? YES X NO □

If YES, state the nature of the risk and what measures will be taken to deal with such problems.

In discussing issues in relation to reconciliation, particularly with community members, this could induce psychological discomfort due to the fact that it could be in relation to past violent experiences. I intend to make clear to any participant that, if at any point there is discomfort in questioning, they have the right to refuse to answer or stop the interview at any point and they do not need to give any justification for terminating the interview. In addition, if they are very upset, to the point where the interview has to be terminated, I will approach a friend or a family member (whomever the person is comfortable with) in order to assist in helping the person overcome their state. I will be conducting interviews primarily in community settings so these people will be accessible. I can help with the victim, or leave the scene if it is better. I will try to ensure they are in a positive state before leaving the scene, but if this is not possible, I will return within a day or two in order to check with the interviewee.

2.2 Does the research require any physically invasive or potentially physically harmful procedures? YES□ NO **X**

If YES, give details and outline procedures to be put in place to deal with potential problems.

2.3 Does the research involve sensitive topics, such as participants' sexual behaviour, illegal activities, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their ethnic status? YES X NO □

If YES, give details.

I may be in contact with victims of war (see section 2.1).

2.4 Is it likely that this research will lead to the disclosure of information about child abuse or neglect or other information that would require the researchers to breach confidentiality conditions agreed with participants?

YES☐ NO X

If YES, indicate the likelihood of such disclosure and your proposed response to this.

2.5 Is it likely that the research findings could be used in a way that would adversely affect participants or particular groups of people?

YES☐ NO X

If YES, describe the potential risk for participants of this use of the data. Outline any steps that will be taken to protect participants.

2.6 Is it likely that participation in this research could adversely affect participants in any other way? YES☐ NO X

If YES, give details and outline procedures to be put in place to deal with such problems.

2.7 Is this research expected to benefit the participants, directly or indirectly?

YES☐ NO X

If YES, give details.

2.8 Will the true purpose of the research be concealed from the participants?

YES☐ NO X

If YES, explain what information will be concealed and why. Will participants be debriefed at the conclusion of the study? If not, why not?

SECTION 3: POTENTIAL RISKS TO THE RESEARCHER/S

3.1 Is the research likely to involve any psychological or physical risks to the researcher, and/or research assistants), including those recruited locally?

YES☐ NO X

If Yes, explain what measures will be taken to ensure adequate protection/support.

SECTION 4: PARTICIPANTS

4.1 How many participants is it hoped to include in the research?

I will be working with members of various communities who have previously been or are currently working with the organization I am researching. This will include participants in rural communities for whom the project is set up, employees from the organization and donors who have a relationship with the organization. It will be probably be approximately 150-200 people.

4.2 What criteria will be used in deciding on the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the study?

I will primarily be focusing my research on people directly related to the organization so this will include community members who participate in the organization's activities, employees from the organization and donors who contribute to the organization.

4.3 Are any of the participants likely to:

be under 18 years of age?	YES☐	NO X
be looked after children (including those living in local authority care or those living at home with a legal supervision requirement)?	YES☐	NO X
be physically or mentally ill?	YES☐	NO X
have a disability?	YES☐	NO X
be members of a vulnerable or stigmatized minority?	YES	NO X
be unlikely to be proficient in English?	YES X	NO ☐
be in a client or professional relationship with the researchers?	YES	NO X
be in a student-teacher relationship with the researchers?	YES☐	NO X
be in any other dependent relationship with the researchers?	YES☐	NO X
have difficulty in reading and/or comprehending any printed material distributed as part of the research process?	YES X	NO ☐
be vulnerable in other ways?	YES☐	NO X

If YES to any of the above, explain and describe the measures that will be used to protect and/or inform participants.

My primary mode of research will be through talking and communicating, not through any printed material. I intend to ensure that any people I speak with will not be in any sort of danger in speaking to me by going through the appropriate communal channels. For example, when going into a community,

I will first speak to the chief to ensure that it is okay to be asking questions so that I do not offend anyone, nor do I put any participants in a compromising position. In addition, I intend to make it clear that participation is voluntary, that no names will be used in any documentation (they will be kept anonymous) and that they understand nothing they tell me will be communicated to the organization. I will ensure that before asking any questions that they understand I am doing research. I will be using a research assistant in communities so participants will be able to speak in their preferred language.

Do the researchers need to be cleared through the Disclosure (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) Scheme? See http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/pvg/pvg_index.html YES☐ NO X

Will it be difficult to ascertain whether participants are vulnerable in any of the ways listed above (e.g. where participants are recruited via the internet)?
YES☐ NO X

If YES, what measures will be used to verify the identity of participants, or protect vulnerable participants?

4.4 How will the sample be recruited?

4.5 Will participants receive any financial or other material benefits because of participation?
YES☐ NO X

If YES, what benefits will be offered to participants and why?

Before completing Sections 5 & 6 please refer to the University Data Protection Policy to ensure that the relevant conditions relating to the processing of personal data under Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 are satisfied. Details are Available at:

www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk

SECTION 5: CONFIDENTIALITY AND HANDLING OF DATA

5.1 Will the research require the collection of personal information from e.g. universities, schools, employers, or other agencies about individuals without their direct consent?
YES☐ NO X

If YES, state what information will be sought and why written consent for access to this information will not be obtained from the participants themselves.

5.2 Does the research involve the collection of sensitive data (including visual images of respondents) through the internet? YES NO X

If YES, describe measures taken to ensure written consent for access to this information.

5.3 Will any part of the research involving participants be audio/film/video taped or recorded using any other electronic medium?

YES X NO

If YES, what medium is to be used and how will the recordings be used?

If I have a structured interview, perhaps with a donor agency or external adviser, I may use a recorder. I will ask permission before using this device.

5.4 Who will have access to the raw data?

Only I will have access to the raw data.

5.5 Will participants be identifiable, including through internet searches? YES X NO

If YES, how will their consent to quotations/identifications be sought?

This depends on the informants I am interviewing. With community members I do intend for them to remain anonymous. Employees and donors have the option of remaining anonymous or having their names/organizational affiliations stated. This will be discussed prior to interviews.

5.6 If not, how will anonymity be preserved?

5.7 Will the datafiles/audio/video tapes, etc. be disposed of after the study? YES X NO

5.8 How long they will be retained?

They will be retained for the entirety of my writing up phase of my thesis

5.9 How will they eventually be disposed of?

After my thesis is finished, I will delete the audiotapes and transcripts.

5.10 How do you intend for the results of the research to be used?

They will be used for the purposes of writing my Ph.D thesis.

5.11 Will feedback of findings be given to participants? YES X NO □

If YES, how and when will this feedback be provided?

I will send the Organizations a copy of my thesis via email if they wish to obtain a copy. However, it may be difficult to distribute a copy to each and every participant.

SECTION 6: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT

6.1 Will written consent be obtained from participants?

YES□ NO X

If YES, attach a copy of the information sheet and consent forms.

In some contexts of ethnographic research, written consent may not be obtainable or may not be meaningful. If written consent will NOT be obtained, please explain why circumstances make obtaining consent problematic.

There are many individuals who cannot read and write and feel uncomfortable due to this fact and thus, may affect the contents of an interaction. Therefore, I would prefer to obtain verbal consent. I will explain that I am a university student looking to understand individual interaction and participation with the organization and if it would be possible to inquire what their views and perceptions are in relation to the organization's work. I will explain that this information is independent and anything communicated will be kept confidential and not relayed to the organization.

Administrative consent may be deemed sufficient:

a) for studies where the data collection involves aggregated (not individual) statistical information and where the collection of data presents:

(i) no invasion of privacy;
(ii) no potential social or emotional risks:

b) for studies which focus on the development and evaluation of curriculum materials, resources, guidelines, test items, or programme evaluations rather than the study, observation, and evaluation of individuals.

6.2 Will administrative consent be obtained in lieu of participants' consent? YES NO X

If YES, explain why individual consent is not considered necessary.

In the case of research in online spaces or using online technology to access participants, will consent be obtained from participants?

If YES, explain how this consent will be obtained.

If NO, give reasons.

I am doing ethnographic research and semi-structured interviews; therefore it will require much more engagement with individuals.

6.3 In the case of children under 16 participating in the research on an individual basis, will the consent or assent of parents be obtained? YES NO X

If YES, explain how this consent or assent will be obtained.

If NO, give reasons.

I will not be speaking to people under the age of 16.

6.4 Will the consent or assent (at least verbal) of children under 16 participating in the research on an individual basis be obtained?
YES NO

If YES, explain how this consent or assent will be obtained.

If NO, give reasons.

See Above

6.5 In the case of participants whose first language is not English, will arrangements be made to ensure informed consent?
YES X NO

If YES, what arrangements will be made?

I will be using a research assistant to assist with translation in communities.

If NO, give reasons.

6.6 In the case of participants with disabilities (e.g. learning difficulties or mental health problems), will arrangements be made to ensure informed consent?
YES☐ NO ☐

If YES, what arrangements will be made?

If NO, give reasons.

6.7 Many funders encourage making datasets available for use by other researchers. Will the data collected in this research be made available for secondary use? YES☐ NO X

If YES, what arrangements are in place to ensure the consent of participants to secondary use?

SECTION 7: Unplanned/unforeseen problems

7.1 Is the research likely to encounter any significant ethical risks that cannot be planned for at this stage? YES X
NO ☐

If YES, please indicate what arrangements are being made to address these as they arise in the course of the project.

There is always the possibility of unforeseen problems including the potential for political instability. I intend to register at the US embassy or consulate in Freetown in order to ensure my safety if anything were to go wrong.

There is also the possibility of illness. I intend to take precautions to the best of my abilities, including taking anti-malarial medication. I have already received all the appropriate vaccines for the region.

SECTION 8: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The University has a 'Policy on the Conflict of Interest', which states that a conflict of interest would arise in cases where an employee of the University might be

"compromising research objectivity or independence in return for financial or non-financial benefit for him/herself or for a relative or friend." See:
http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policy/Conflict_of_Interest.pdf

Conflict of interest may also include cases where the source of funding raises ethical issues, either because of concerns about the moral standing or activities of the funder, or concerns about the funder's motivation for commissioning the research and the uses to which the research might be put.

The University policy states that the responsibility for avoiding a conflict of interest, in the first instance, lies with the individual, but that potential conflicts of interest should always be disclosed, normally to the line manager or Head of Department. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest or to cease involvement until the conflict has been resolved may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could result in dismissal.

8.1 Does your research involve a conflict of interest as outlined above

YES ☐

NO X

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